

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 6 and 7, 1996

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Report of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 1996. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, William Rolfe Kerr, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Dennis E. Simmons, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Fran-

cisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Lowell D. Wood
The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you, wherever you may be, from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this the first general session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that this April 6th is the 166th anniversary of the founding of the Church.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder James M. Parimore, who is excused.

As I indicated last October, this historic and wonderful Tabernacle is becoming increasingly inadequate in accommodating all who wish to attend

these conferences and other large gatherings. The Tabernacle is filled to capacity this morning. I am pleased to announce that we have had our architects and engineers working on the design of a hall which will seat three or four times as many for conference and which will serve other Church purposes, as well as possibly some community cultural events. It is a big undertaking, but we can do it more easily in our circumstances than could our forebears in their circumstances when they built this Tabernacle. More will be said on this at a later time.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brother Robert Bowden with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

They opened by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" and will now favor us with "O My Father." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

It will now be our privilege to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

"The rising up of my church"

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, as we begin this historic conference I am confident that we will hear the word of the Lord during all of the proceedings. That divine guidance has directed the affairs of this Church for over 166 years today, since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was legally organized on April 6, 1830. What has happened in this work in this relatively short time is a miracle. As a small boy I remember hearing my great-uncle William Wetzel tell about walking with his family across the American plains to the Salt Lake Valley. His stories of struggle, sacrifice, and faith made an indelible impression on my young heart.

When Great-grandfather's family arrived in this valley, most of the members of the Church lived in a group of small, dusty settlements in the territory of Deseret. Many had braved the ocean to come to the United States. Then they traveled by wagon and handcart through the searing heat and the intense cold of the American plains and the high mountain peaks to find peace and worship God.

In large measure, members of our faith were at that time a despised, persecuted, and driven people. But since then has come the fulfillment of the Lord's statement, "In this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun."¹ No one can fully understand how and why the Church has come "out of obscurity"² and blossomed without knowing some of the fundamental prophetic truths on which the Church rests.

Follow the Brethren

When I was first named as a General Authority many years ago, I went to see

President Hugh B. Brown, then in the First Presidency, and asked him, "President Brown, what advice have you got for a new, young, inexperienced General Authority?" This wise and venerable man responded simply and directly, "Stick with the Brethren." Who are the Brethren? The Brethren are those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. They are the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, each of whom is an apostle and prophet; the Seventy; and, in temporal matters, the Presiding Bishopric.

The rise of the Church from Palmyra to Kirtland, from Kirtland to Nauvoo, from Nauvoo to the West, and in over 150 countries all over the world has come about because the body of the Church, wherever it was, has been loyal to the Brethren. Millions of men and women have followed the prophets of God. I wish to pay special tribute to all of the faithful women since the time of the Restoration who have listened to the prophetic voice of the Church. Their supernal womanly gifts and talents have blessed the work of God in a most important and indispensable way.

Those who have stayed with the Brethren have a firm testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God who, under divine authority, reestablished the Church of Jesus Christ in our time. Such solid faith is the foundation of the loyalty manifested by the great majority of faithful members who, throughout the history of the Church, have received the confirming witness concerning the reality of continuing revelation. This revelation has come in its time from each of the Presidents of the Church, their counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who serve under the direction of the President.

Only those with authority may lead

The dispensation of divine truth in which we now live, in distinction from previous dispensations, will not be destroyed by apostasy. This is in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy that "the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" nor "left to other people."³ President John Taylor affirmed this also when he said: "There is one thing very certain, . . . and that is, whatever men may think, and however they may plot and contrive, that this Kingdom will never be given into the hands of another people. It will grow and spread and increase, and no man living can stop its progress."⁴

From the beginning some from both inside and outside of the Church have sought to persuade members of the Church against following the inspired declarations of those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. Some of those seeking to mislead have done so claiming special endowments of intelligence or inspiration beyond the established order of the Church. As a warning against those so claiming special authority, the Lord made it clear "that it shall not be given to any one . . . to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."⁵

Apostasy and return of Oliver Cowdery

In the early days of the Restoration, Oliver Cowdery became the second elder of the Church and participated with Joseph in the marvelous Restoration experiences. He was ordained with the Prophet Joseph in 1829 under the hands of a heavenly messenger when the priesthood was restored to the earth. Oliver served as a scribe, writing down the translation of the Book of Mormon as it poured forth from the mouth of the

Prophet Joseph. He shared with the Prophet Joseph the great visions manifested in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 and witnessed the bestowal of the keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

In an early revelation the Lord warned Oliver: "Behold, thou art blessed, and art under no condemnation. But beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation."⁶ Oliver had great intellect and enjoyed marvelous spiritual blessings. However, over time he forgot the Lord's warning, and pride entered into his heart. Brigham Young later said of this pride:

"I have seen men who belonged to this kingdom, and who really thought that if they were not associated with it, it could not progress. One man especially, whom I now think of, . . . was peculiarly gifted in self-reliance and general ability. He said as much to the Prophet Joseph a number of times as to say that if he left this kingdom, it could not progress any further. I speak of Oliver Cowdery. He forsook it, and it still rolled on, and still triumphed over every opposing foe, and bore off safely all those who clung to it."⁷

In October 1848, 10 years after leaving the Church, Oliver Cowdery visited the Church headquarters in Iowa and humbly petitioned to be received again into the Church through baptism. Describing this memorable event, George A. Smith wrote of Oliver: "He bore testimony in the most positive terms . . . and told the people if they wanted to follow the right path, to keep [in] the main channel of the stream—where the body of the Church goes, there is the authority."⁸

In his final testimony he affirmed the coming of John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood; and the coming of Peter, James, and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He further stated: "These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints. Blessed is the Elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall [continue] to the end."⁹

"By their fruits ye shall know them"

Over the years many offshoots and splinter groups have not stayed with the Brethren. This is not a new phenomenon. After the Crucifixion of the Savior, Peter and the Apostles were preaching to a hostile audience. Gamaliel, a man learned in the law, defended their right to preach. After recalling the ill fate of two different groups that had risen up and drawn people away, he presented this sure test of truth. Said he, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."¹⁰

In the great Sermon on the Mount, the Savior posed a poignant question: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" He went on to say: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."¹¹ The sweet fruits of this work are now known over much of the earth.

Respect domains of authority

To validate those who have authority, the Lord also said, "All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith."¹² Yet He also said that "every man might speak in the name of God."¹³ How can this be? Every man and young man in the Church who lives in accordance with the Savior's teachings is ordained to the priesthood. The use of this power, however, is limited. Every father is to his family a patriarch and every mother a matriarch as coequals in their distinctive parental roles. Members, men and women, may receive inspiration by the gift of the Holy

Ghost for their personal lives and for their areas of responsibility.

Only the prophet and President, and no one else, can use *all* of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. In our time that man is President Gordon B. Hinckley. He and his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have delegated specific authority and responsibility to other General Authorities and to local authorities and auxiliary leaders to direct the work in their own areas of responsibility.

Early in the Church the Lord warned members, "Thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church."¹⁴

Some have said, "My integrity will not permit me to yield my conscience to anyone." A clear conscience is a very precious spiritual endowment when it is guided by the Holy Ghost. Ultimately everyone has the responsibility of making his or her own moral decisions. However, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church . . . to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."¹⁵

In addition, some have claimed higher spiritual gifts or authority outside the established priesthood authority of the Church. They say that they believe in the principles and ordinances of the gospel and accept the President of the Church as the legal administrator thereof, but claim they have a higher order which the President does not have. This is often done to justify an activity which is not in accordance with the doctrines of the Church. There can be no higher order, however, because the President of the Church both holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. The Lord has said of the President of the Church that "none else shall be appointed [to receive commandments and revelations] except it be through him."¹⁶

Apostasy and return of Thomas B. Marsh

Thomas B. Marsh was another favored associate of the Prophet Joseph. Over this pulpit in the April 1984 general conference, President Hinckley reminded us that Brother Marsh was serving as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve when he chose to disregard the decisions of the First Presidency and other Church leaders in a dispute between his wife and another woman over some milk strippings.¹⁷

When, as did the prodigal son, he finally "came to himself,"¹⁸ he wrote to Heber C. Kimball, who had been his associate in the Quorum of the Twelve, stating:

"Having lost my wife three years since, I began to awake to a sense of my situation; . . . I know that I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and have rendered myself unworthy of your confidence; or of a place in the family of Heaven. . . . I deserve no place among you in the church even as the lowest member; but I cannot live long so without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured." He then recited the typical lesson his years of rebellion had taught him: "The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford." He pleaded with his brethren for comfort and peace and their smiles upon him.¹⁹

After being rebaptized, Thomas came to Salt Lake City, where he asked Brigham Young, the President of the Church, for forgiveness. He was invited by President Young to speak at a Sunday service where Thomas offered this advice to his listeners: "If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as

the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities."²⁰

Five fundamental truths of authority

The Prophet Joseph explained in the winter of 1832–33 that "no true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; and the priesthood being once established on earth, with [the] power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. . . . You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church."²¹

May I now review five of the fundamental prophetic truths of the Church:

First, the keys and the authority of God have been given by Him to Joseph Smith and each of his successors who have been called as Presidents of the Church.

Second, those keys and authority are never to be given to another people, and those who have such authority are "known to the Church."²²

Third, continuing revelation and leadership for the Church come through the President of the Church, and he will never mislead the Saints.

Fourth, individual members of the Church may receive revelation for their own callings and areas of responsibility and for their own families. They may not receive spiritual instruction for those higher in authority.

Fifth, those who claim direct revelation from God for the Church outside the established order and channel of the priesthood are misguided. This also applies to any who follow them.

If any find themselves in this position, please know that there is always an open door in the Church for those who wish to return to full fellowship with the sisters and with the brethren of the priesthood. The welcome will be with open arms.

My testimony of the divinity of the callings of the presiding Brethren as the representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ flows from the deepest wellspring of my soul. For many years I have watched the process of continuous revelation which emanates from God through the keys, authority, and direction of the President of the Church. I testify that this revelatory power has directed this work since April 6, 1830. That confirmation is the source of the greatest knowledge I have. I counsel and pray that all will heed the ongoing prophetic voice of this Church, which reveals the word of God in our day. Of this I witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 5:14.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
3. Daniel 2:44; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:44.
4. In *Journal of Discourses*, 25:348; see also 14:367.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 23:1.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 11:252.
8. George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, 20 Oct. 1848, in *Millennial Star*, 1 Jan. 1849, 14.
9. Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, 13 Jan. 1849, in *Deseret News*, 26 Mar. 1884, 153.
10. Acts 5:38–39.
11. Matthew 7:16–20.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 26:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:20.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 28:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 28:12.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 43:4.
17. See Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 110–11; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 83.
18. Luke 15:17.
19. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, 5 May 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church Historical Department; spelling and punctuation modernized.
20. In *Journal of Discourses*, 5:206.
21. Reported in “Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh,” *Millennial Star*, 20 Nov. 1846, 139.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

The law of witnesses

Humbly, gratefully I stand before you to testify of God's words and works. I come in the spirit of one going before to prepare the way. The commission to do so comes from the Lord. My desire is to help us prepare for His Second Coming and to dwell in His presence, to en-

joy the gifts and graces He alone can bestow.

During the course of this general conference, much will be said concerning the Lord's work and what Heavenly Father desires of His children. These are sacred things. May it be known that the speakers do not stand alone in their declarations. Accompanying their testimonies, I

raise my voice as yet another witness. This process is referred to as the *law of witnesses*.

This law was established to introduce, affirm, and seal the truth upon the hearts of God's children. One never stands alone in carrying the word of God to the world. Moses was called as a prophet to lead Israel, but he was not left alone. The Lord sent to him his brother, Aaron, not only as a voice but as a witness with Moses that the God of Abraham had spoken.

This law of witnesses ushered in the birth, life, and mission of Christ Jesus. Holy angels, John the Baptist, prophets, apostles, the Holy Ghost, the Savior himself, and God our Father all declared His divinity.

This same pattern prevailed at each step in the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. Multiple witnesses, reliable beyond refute, have written and spoken of what their ears heard, their eyes beheld, their hearts understood. In every dispensation two or more witnesses have joined their voices in such proclamations. It is the pattern of heaven. Said the Apostle Paul, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Bearing witness to a skeptical father

The essential nature of witnesses was brought forcibly to my mind some years ago while seeking permission from a man for his wife and children to be baptized. Our missionaries had taught the family of the divinity of Christ, the sacred appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1820, and the Restoration of the true Church upon the earth. To each point the missionaries bore fervent testimony, and the Holy Ghost confirmed to the mother and children that it was all true. They wished to be baptized.

The father, however, was skeptical. He felt no such spiritual confirmation. Long-held beliefs and traditions filled his mind with doubt. I met with him to discuss his misgivings and the desire of his wife and children to be baptized. Though he did not wish to keep them from making their own choices, he was deeply troubled by the conflict he felt between his beliefs and family traditions and this message of the Restoration. As our conversation drew to a close, I bore my witness to him. It included my testimony of what the missionaries had taught. When I was explaining the divine nature of this Church, the Lord's words from the Doctrine and Covenants came into my mind, and I testified that this is "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30).

My friend was startled. This declaration troubled him, and in disbelief he said, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? My church has many more members than yours; my church is much larger and more influential than yours; and furthermore, the history and traditions of my church go back much further than Joseph Smith. How can you possibly claim that yours is the only true church?"

His reaction is similar to that of many when first hearing such a testimony—one that could be experienced by some who are listening to this conference. During these proceedings, those who participate through prayer, the spoken word, and music will be testifying of what they know to be true. Their witnesses will include:

- The reality of God, the divinity of His Beloved Son, and the doctrines of Christ.
- The divine calling of prophets, seers, and revelators, with special emphasis given to the first prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, and the Lord's prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

These witnesses will point us to:

- Revealed truths about the purposes of life, our origin and destiny, and
- The holy scriptures, often referencing the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost can help us know

To some, these testimonies will be troubling, at variance with what they think or believe. They may ask, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? How can you know?"

To you with such questions, I say, Before reacting, before closing your mind, before finding fault because of a word, please listen and consider this inspired insight. I quote: "'Words do not convey meanings; they call them forth.' I speak out of the context of my experience, and you listen out of the context of yours, and that is why communication is difficult" (David O. McKay, quoted by Lowell L. Bennion, in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 94; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 90).

This is a phenomenon of mortality and lies at the heart of one's skepticism. But amid differing views on spiritual matters, there comes to us from scripture the wonderful and comforting promise "*Ye may know*." Though our backgrounds are different, we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. He has provided a way to bridge our differences, a way *each of us may know*. This way is through the power and sure witness of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, sent forth by God to reveal all needful things. He teaches and testifies with divine power and clarity. His witness may go unheard or unheeded, forsaken or denied, but it is never misunderstood. "The Holy Ghost is a revelator" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 328). That which is received of

Him has a more powerful effect upon the soul than anything else received in any other way. A millennium of experience through sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, and all the powers of the universe combined cannot approach the sublime and complete experience of one brief moment under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is a spirit personage. He has power to speak to the spirit of every man and woman, boy and girl. His message is conveyed with absolute certainty. This revealed knowledge constitutes a personal testimony and witness of the truth. (See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 1:756.)

Said the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Yea, behold, I will tell you in *your mind* and in *your heart*, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon *you* and which shall dwell in *your heart*."

"Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation" (D&C 8:2–3; italics added).

How perfect and complete! How extraordinary! How wonderful!

"Ask, and it shall be given you"

Different though our lives may be, there can come to each of us the same sure anchor—the *truth* from God. It is absolute, infinite, and available. As Jesus said:

"The word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:45–46).

He further explained: "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . . The Spirit of truth is of God" (D&C 93:24–26).

And finally the Lord urges, "Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:12).

Skeptical friend receives a sure witness

Now for the rest of the story. You recall that my friend asked, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? How can you possibly claim that yours is the only true church?"

The answer came, not from me but through me: "I am not claiming it," I said. "I am quoting it. Jesus Christ said it. Don't argue with me. If you wish to take issue, pray and talk with Heavenly Father about it."

The conversation came to a close, he gave permission for his family members to be baptized, and we parted.

Some weeks later, as I was leaving a stake conference, I saw two men coming toward me, shouldering their way through the crowd. One of them was the same man of whom I have spoken. The first thought that crossed my mind was, "Oh no, here comes an argument!"

As he approached, he extended his hand and asked, "Do you remember me?"

"I certainly do," I said, "and I want you to know that this is still the only true and living Church."

Before more could be said, his handshake tightened and he replied, "I know! I have prayed about it as you said. The Lord has told me by the power of His Spirit that it is all true. I was baptized last weekend and ordained a priest. Today I am baptizing my friend here, for he also knows it is true."

My personal witness

Such is the purpose of witnesses; such is the power of the Holy Ghost; such is the anchor of truth. To the things which have been and will yet be testified of, I now add my witness that "*ye may know*." God lives! We are His children,

and He loves us. Jesus Christ is His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, and the Savior of the world. The Father and Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, answered his prayers, and gave him instructions. Other heavenly ministrants came to him thereafter, restoring what had been lost. They included Moroni bringing forth the Book of Mormon; John the Baptist restoring the priesthood of Aaron; Peter, James, and John conferring upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the higher priesthood and holy apostleship; Moses with the keys of the gathering of Israel; Elias with the gospel of Abraham; and Elijah with the power to seal mothers, fathers, and children together as eternal families. The Lord's gospel has been restored and His earthly kingdom reestablished, which He has named The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:3-4; 3 Nephi 27:7-8).

If you find this or any other declaration of this conference unsettling, take up the matter with your Heavenly Father in prayer. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6). For "if ye . . . ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth . . . unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost *ye may know the truth* of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5; italics added).

This is my witness—all of this is true! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Come, Follow Me."

President Hinckley

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has just spoken to us, and then this chorus of talented and gifted young people has sung "Come, Follow Me."

We shall now hear from Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

Honor the Sabbath day

Good morning, brothers and sisters. My subject is the Sabbath day, specifically as it relates to shopping on Sunday.

From the beginning, God has instructed prophets to teach the covenant people to honor the Sabbath day. God rested from His creative labors on the seventh day.¹ This day was blessed and sanctified as a holy day.

The fourth commandment to Moses was to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”²

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that “Sabbath observance was a sign between ancient Israel and their God whereby the chosen people might be known.”³

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recognize Sunday as the Sabbath in commemoration of the fact that Christ came forth from the grave on Sunday, and the Apostles commenced meeting thereafter on the first day of the week.⁴

“Keep thyself unspotted from the world”

On Sunday, August 7, 1831, the Lord revealed the following to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

“Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

“But remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

“And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full.”⁵

In a recent regional training meeting for priesthood leaders, President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed concern that members of the Church may have a tendency to take on the ways of the world. He said: “We don’t adopt them immediately, but we slowly take them on, unfortunately. . . . I wish I had the power to convert this whole Church to the observance of the Sabbath. I know our people would be more richly blessed of the Lord if they would walk in faithfulness in the observance of the Sabbath.”⁶

Do not shop on Sunday

A very important aspect of properly observing the Sabbath concerns shopping on Sunday. Unfortunately many commercial businesses and establishments are open on Sunday. The world sees no conflict in Sunday shopping. But we of the Church have been counseled and taught by prophets to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world.”⁷ We should not shop on Sunday.

President Hinckley continued with the following instruction to priesthood leaders: “There isn’t anybody in this Church who has to buy furniture on Sunday. There really isn’t. There isn’t anybody in this Church who has to buy a new automobile on Sunday, is there? No. There isn’t anybody in this Church who, with a little care and planning, has to buy groceries on Sunday. No. . . . You don’t need ice cream to be bought on Sunday. . . . You don’t need to make Sunday a day of merchandising. . . . I don’t think we need to patronize the ordinary business merchants on the Sabbath day. Why do they stay open? To get customers. Who are those customers?

Well, they are not all nonmembers of this Church. You know that and I know that."⁸

In the book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament, the people were taught to observe the Sabbath with the following instruction: "And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day."⁹

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve has taught: "Modern-day prophets have encouraged us not to shop on Sunday. . . . Those of us who shop on the Sabbath cannot escape responsibility for encouraging businesses to remain open on that day. Essential services must be provided, but most Sabbath transactions could be avoided if merchants and customers were determined to avoid doing business on the Lord's day."¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, let's not shop on Sunday. One way we avoid this is by planning ahead. Fill up the gas tank on Saturday. Acquire the needed groceries for the weekend on Saturday. Don't you be the means of causing someone to work on Sunday because you patronize their establishment. Of course, we know that there are essential businesses that must be open on Sunday. These are emergency, medical, transportation, and some forms of protective services, such as police and fire. We are grateful for those persons who staff these essential public establishments and afford us protection and comfort.

In many countries of the world and in many states of the Union, shopping on Sunday is not done or is prohibited by law. We as a community of Saints should use our influence in a positive way to encourage other citizens to not shop on Sunday. We should start with ourselves. If we will not shop on Sunday, businesses which open on Sunday will have no financial reason to remain open on Sunday. It's really that simple.

I often drive through small rural communities of Utah on a Sunday afternoon as I return home from stake conference assignments. I observe that almost always the tractors are idle and the fields are empty. I thank God for the faith of the humble farmers. When I enter the cities, I see the parking lots of many stores filled with cars on a Sunday, and I am saddened that the Lord's law is being broken. The justification for and reason often cited by the owners and operators of such businesses is to be competitive, to conform to corporate policy, and so on.

I well remember an interview President Spencer W. Kimball once had with a faithful Church member. It went like this: "What is your occupation?" And [the man] said, 'I operate a service station.' And I asked, 'Do you operate on the Sabbath?' His answer was, 'No, I do not.' 'Well, how can you get along? Most service station operators seem to think they must open on the Sabbath.' 'I get along well,' he said. 'The Lord is good to me.' 'Do you not have stiff competition?' I asked. 'Yes, indeed,' he replied. 'Across the street is a man who keeps open all day Sunday.' 'And you never open?' I asked. 'No, sir,' he said, 'and I am grateful, and the Lord is kind, and I have sufficient for my needs.'"¹¹

Our heritage of Sabbath observance

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. We know we live in the world, but we are taught to not be of the world. Like ancient Israel, who also were a covenant people, we should encourage the proper observance of the Sabbath day by not shopping on Sunday. Let this become a sign with our God by which we shall be known.

This is our heritage. In this dispensation, from the days of our pioneer forefathers, we have been so taught. I recall a talk given by President Hinckley several years ago wherein he said:

"May I take you back 142 years when there was, of course, no tabernacle here, nor temple, nor Temple Square. On July 24, 1847, the pioneer company of our people came into this valley. An advance group had arrived a day or two earlier. Brigham Young arrived on Saturday. The next day, Sabbath services were held both in the morning and in the afternoon. There was no hall of any kind in which to meet. I suppose that in the blistering heat of that July Sunday they sat on the tongues of their wagons and leaned against the wheels while the Brethren spoke. The season was late, and they were faced with a gargantuan and immediate task if they were to grow seed for the next season. But President Young pleaded with them not to violate the Sabbath then or in the future."¹²

Can we possibly imagine how tempting it must have been for our pioneer forefathers to break the Sabbath day? Their survival depended on the food they could grow and harvest. Yet their leaders counseled them to exercise faith in the promises of the Lord and to respect the Sabbath day.

Blessings for honoring the Sabbath

What are the promises and blessings of the Lord to those who honor the Sabbath day by not shopping on Sunday? The 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and the 26th chapter of Leviticus in the Old Testament give similar promises: The fulness of the earth is yours; the land will be blessed with rain and will yield its increase; there will be peace in the land; and God will magnify His faithful people, have respect for them, and establish His covenant with them.¹³

As another blessing—and a warning—I think of the counsel of President George Albert Smith when he said, "Much of the sorrow and distress that is

afflicting . . . mankind is traceable to the fact that they have ignored [God's] admonition to keep the Sabbath day holy."¹⁴

A measure of the depth of conversion

In conclusion, and appropriate to this beautiful Easter season, our observance of the Sabbath is an indication of the depth of our conversion and our willingness to keep sacred covenants. Elder Mark E. Petersen has said:

"Our observance or nonobservance of the Sabbath is an unerring measure of our attitude toward the Lord personally and toward his suffering in Gethsemane, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. It is a sign of whether we are Christians in very deed, or whether our conversion is so shallow that commemoration of his atoning sacrifice means little or nothing to us."¹⁵

I bear humble witness of the sanctity of the Sabbath day and of our need to resolve not to shop on Sunday. It is an element of our faith and obedience to eternal principles. It is a sign between our God and His chosen people. It is a true law and commandment of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Moses 3:3; Genesis 2:2–3.
2. Exodus 20:8.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658; see also Nehemiah 13:15–22; Isaiah 56:1–8; Jeremiah 17:19–27; Ezekiel 46:1–7; Exodus 31:12–17.
4. See John 20:1–19; Luke 24:1–12; Mark 16:1–9; Matthew 28:1–6; Acts 20:7.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–13.
6. Heber City–Springville Utah regional conference, priesthood leadership session, 13 May 1995.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; James 1:27.
8. Heber City–Springville Utah regional conference, priesthood leadership session, 13 May 1995.

9. Nehemiah 10:31.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 21.
11. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 227.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 51.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:16–19; Leviticus 26:2–6, 9.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1935, 120.
15. In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 72; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 49.

President Hinckley

Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” Following this we will hear from Sister Chieko Okazaki, first counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

The chorus and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Sister Chieko N. Okazaki

We are all one in Christ

My dear brothers and sisters, aloha! In February I rejoiced with you when the number of members outside the United States edged ever so slightly past the number of members inside the United States. That slight shift is an important symbol of the international nature of the Church. I thought of Paul’s statement to the Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This week I celebrate the 54th anniversary of my baptism. People like me who are converts know the promise of Paul: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Brothers and sisters, today I want to talk about the beautiful oneness that we share in the gospel. I just returned from the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, and Fiji three weeks ago, where Sister Susan Warner and I participated in leadership training. Earlier assignments have taken me to Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Samoa, Korea, and Japan.

In all these places we worked hard and long. People have said, “Oh, you must have been so tired.” On the contrary, there was a feeling of being borne up “as on eagles’ wings” (D&C 124:18) because we have seen the daughters of Zion “awake, and arise . . . and put on [their] beautiful garments” (Moroni 10:31) in response to the good news of the gospel. We taught, but—and this is the point I want to stress—we also learned.

The most important lesson was that we are truly all one in Christ Jesus. We are one in our love of the Savior. We are one in our testimonies of the gospel. We are one in faith, hope, and charity. We are one in our conviction that the Book of Mormon is the inspired word of God. We are one in supporting President Hinckley and the other General Authorities. We are one in loving each other.

Are we perfect in any of these things? No. We all have much to learn. Are we exactly the same in any of these things? No. We are all at different points on our journey back to our Father in Heaven. Did the Jews and Greeks whom Paul addressed in his epistle to the Galatians stop being Jews and Greeks when

they were baptized? Did the men stop being men and the women stop being women? No. But they had all “been baptized into Christ” and had “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Nephi explains the same principle in these terms: The Savior “*inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and all are alike unto God*” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Cultures differ, but gospel is the same

God has given us many gifts, much diversity, and many differences, but the essential thing is what we know about each other—that we are all His children. Our challenge as members of the Church is for all of us to learn from each other, that we may all love each other and grow together.

The doctrines of the gospel are indispensable. They are essential, but the packaging is optional. Let me share a simple example to show the difference between the doctrines of the Church and the cultural packaging. Here is a bottle of Utah peaches, prepared by a Utah homemaker to feed her family during a snowy season. Hawaiian homemakers don’t bottle fruit. They pick enough fruit for a few days and store it in baskets like this for their families. This basket contains a mango, bananas, a pineapple, and a papaya. I bought these fruits in a supermarket in Salt Lake City, but they might have been picked by a Polynesian homemaker to feed her family in a climate where fruit ripens all year round.

The basket and the bottle are different containers, but the content is the same: fruit for a family. Is the bottle right and the basket wrong? No, they are both right. They are containers appropriate to the culture and the needs of the people. And they are both appropriate for the content they carry, which is the fruit.

Now, what is the fruit? Paul tells us, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). In the sisterhood of Relief Society, in the brotherhood of priesthood quorums, in the reverent coming together to partake of the sacrament, the fruit of the Spirit unites us in love, joy, and peace whether the Relief Society is in Taipei or Tonga, whether the priesthood quorum is in Montana or Mexico, and whether the sacrament meeting is in Fiji or the Philippines.

All over the world, as brothers and sisters in the gospel, we can learn from each other, grow closer together, and increase in love for each other. Our unity grows from what we have in common all around the world. They are the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, our faith in the Savior, our testimonies of the scriptures, our gratitude for guidance from living prophets, and our sense of ourselves as a people striving to be Saints. These are the principles of the gospel.

Let us be sensitive to the unchanging and powerful core principles of the gospel. Let us understand that they matter most. Let us build firm foundations on these principles. Then when the rains fall and the floods come, our house will be “founded upon a rock” and it will not fall (Matthew 7:25).

Then, building on that firm foundation, let us rejoice with each other, listen to each other, learn from each other, and help each other apply those principles as we deal with our different circumstances, different cultures, different generations, and different geographies.

Learning from our differences

For six years now I have been listening to the Relief Society women of the Church. I have learned from all of them. I have learned from divorced mothers who are struggling to raise their children alone. I have learned from women who

long to be married but are not, from women who yearn for children but cannot bear them, from women who are at risk from emotional and physical abuse in their homes. I have learned from women who work in their homes and women who work outside their homes. I have learned from women who endure chemical dependencies, experiences of childhood sexual abuse, and chronic illness.

Not many of these women thought they were giving me a gift. Most of them thought they were asking for help. But all of them blessed me as I listened and learned from them.

Speaking the language of the Spirit

When I was called to the Relief Society general presidency six years ago this month, President Hinckley counseled me: "You bring a peculiar quality to this presidency. You will be recognized as one who represents those beyond the borders of the United States and Canada and, as it were, an outreach across the world to members of the Church in many, many lands. They will see in you a representation of their oneness with the Church." He gave me a blessing that my tongue might be loosed as I spoke to the people.

President Hinckley, I want to bear witness to the Lord before you and this congregation that your counsel and your blessing have been literally fulfilled.

I do not speak Korean or Spanish or Tongan. But when I received my assignment to go among the Relief Society sisters and their priesthood leaders in lands where those languages are spoken, I was filled with a great desire to speak to them in their own language. I drew strength from President Hinckley's words of comfort and blessing. With the help of the Church Translation Department and good coaches who spent hours working with me, I was blessed to deliver my addresses in Spanish, Korean, and Tongan as I went among those people. I could feel the Spirit carrying my words to their hearts, and I could feel "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22) bringing back to me their love, their joy, and their faith. I could feel the Spirit making us one.

Brothers and sisters, whether your fruits are peaches or papaya, and whether you bring them in bottles or in baskets, we thank you for offering them in love. Father in Heaven, may we be one and may we be Thine (see D&C 38:27), I pray in the sacred name of our Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Who says the women of this Church don't have a powerful voice? Sister Chieko Okazaki, first counselor in the general Relief Society presidency, has spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Which way do you face?

As I face this congregation, I sense the responsibility entrusted to me. As you face the General Authorities and officers of the Church, you also bear re-

sponsibility. We are all accountable for acting upon the truths that are taught.

Facing you, I am reminded of military days long ago when our platoon heard shouts from a sergeant: "Attention!" "Right face!" "Left face!" "About

face!" We learned to respond to those orders with instant precision. In retrospect, I don't recall ever having heard his command to "face upward." Yet scriptures tell us to "look to God and live."¹

My topic today relates to the first of the Lord's Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."² This commandment may be better known than obeyed. May I share a suggestion that I have found useful in testing my own allegiance to this commandment? When confronted with a challenging choice, I ask myself, "Which way do you face?"

Life without looking to God

Sadly, many individuals don't know where to find God, and exclude Him from their lives. When spiritual needs arise, they may look to the left, the right, or round about. But looking to other people on the same level cannot satisfy spiritual shortages. When the immortal spirit is starved, hunger persists for something more filling. Even when material success comes, there is a hollow ache if living well falls short of living worthily. Inner peace cannot be found in affluence accompanied by spiritual privation.

Invitation to come to the Lord

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints invite all to come unto Christ and enjoy the spiritual feast that His gospel provides. The Saints savor a sweet spiritual nourishment that sustains them through life. This sustenance comes because they have made covenants to take upon themselves the name of the Lord and strive to obey His precepts. Strength comes in recognizing and in being grateful for the Lord's gifts of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life.

Loyal citizens

These gifts are available to all. Citizens of many countries claim membership in the Church. Regardless of their flag or form of government, they find that allegiance to the Lord does not preclude their being loyal citizens of their nations. Fidelity to God enables one to develop a more profound patriotic allegiance and become a better citizen.

In addition to their national citizenship, members of the Church are also citizens of God's kingdom.³ Their commitment to it, however, may be variable. The great majority seek "first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness."⁴ Some allow their allegiance to God and His kingdom to slip below that of other interests in life. They have not yet determined which way they face.⁵

Representatives of the Lord

I perceived such confusion in the mind of a newspaper reporter who asked one of our leaders when a representative of such-and-such a country would become a General Authority. While that question was being answered, I thought about our beloved General Authorities born in the countries of Asia; of Europe; of North, Central, and South America; and of the islands of the sea. Though these Brethren come from many nations and speak several tongues, not one of them was called to represent his native country. Presiding quorums of the Church are not representative assemblies. Each leader has been called to face the people as a representative of the Lord, not the other way around.

General Authorities are "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority."⁶ They are called as "especial witnesses"⁷ unto *all* the world, to teach and testify of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸

Obeying commandments of the Lord

No matter where we live or in what position we serve, all of us need to determine which way we face. God's commandments serve as a standard against which priorities can be measured. Our respect for the first commandment fashions our feelings for all the others. Consider the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, for example.⁹ We live in a time when many people throughout the world have transferred their allegiance on the Sabbath from places of worship to places of amusement. Again I ask, "Which way do you face?"¹⁰

Scriptures give us encouragement to do right:

"If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, . . .

"Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."¹¹

Self-esteem is also earned by obedience to God's commandments regarding chastity.¹² Yet in our day those commands have been attacked and trivialized. The morality of self-discipline with appropriate "denial or restraint has been popularly depicted as unhealthy and dehumanizing." The truth is, "it is dehumanizing to define ourselves by our desires alone."¹³ Each human being is a child of God—created in His image—with natural appetites to control.

If we break God's first commandment, we cannot escape retribution. If we allow any other person or cause to come before allegiance to Him, we will reap a bitter harvest. Paul foresaw "destruction" for those "whose God is their belly."¹⁴ (I might include all forms of anatomical affection.) Any who choose to serve "the creature more than the Creator"¹⁵ deprive themselves of spiritual reward.

Thus, our priorities should be honestly evaluated in terms of that first commandment. If change in direction is needed, we may want to issue a self-command to "about face!" Doing so would please the Lord, who said, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations."¹⁶

Trees reach up for the light and grow in the process. So do we as sons and daughters of heavenly parents. Facing upward provides a loftier perspective than facing right or facing left. Looking up in search of holiness builds strength and dignity as disciples of Deity.¹⁷

Facing our families

Facing upward is crucial for successful parenting. Families deserve guidance from heaven. Parents cannot counsel children adequately from personal experience, fear, or sympathy.¹⁸ But when parents face children as would the Creator who gave them life, parents will be endowed with wisdom beyond that of their own. Wise mothers and fathers will teach members of their family how to make personal decisions based upon divine law.¹⁹ They will teach them that "this life is the time . . . to prepare to meet God."²⁰ They will teach them that decisions of a moral and spiritual character *cannot* be based on freedom to choose without accountability to God for those choices.²¹ With that understanding, parents and children will be rewarded with strength of character, peace of mind, joy, and rejoicing in their posterity.²²

Facing our neighbors

Similarly, relationships with neighbors, friends, and associates will be enhanced as we approach them with "the pure love of Christ."²³ A desire to emulate the Lord provides powerful motivation for good. Our craving for compassion will

cause us to act in accord with the Golden Rule.²⁴ By so doing we will find joy in feeding the poor, clothing the naked, or doing volunteer work of worth.

Service to neighbors takes on new stature when we first look to God. In the Church, when priesthood and auxiliary leaders face their congregations, quorums, and classes as would the Lord, they learn that it does not matter *where* they serve, but *how*. Position in the Church does not exalt anyone, but faithfulness does. On the other hand, aspiring to a visible position—striving to become a master rather than a servant—can destroy the spirit of the worker and the work.

Occasionally confusion exists regarding servants and masters. The Bible reports that a group of men “had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest” among them. Jesus said, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and *servant of all*.”²⁵

Was Jesus asking His disciples to respond to random requests from the crowd or to serve tables?²⁶ No! He was asking them to serve in *His* way. The people were not to be masters of His disciples. The *Lord* is their Master.

In rendering service to others, which way do we face? From the right or the left, we can only push or pull. We can lift only from a higher plane. To reach it we don’t look sideways; we look up to our Master. Just as we must look to God to *live* well, so we must look to God to *serve* well.

Attitudes of effective disciples

If we are called to positions of leadership, we are accountable to the Savior for the acts we perform in that office. Those actions are shaped by attitudes, and attitudes are elevated while lowering our heads in humble prayer. So state words in the hymn “Before Thee, Lord, I Bow My Head”:

Look up, my soul; be not cast down.
Keep not thine eyes upon the ground.
Break off the shackles of the earth.
Receive, my soul, the spirit’s birth.
And now as I go forth again
To mingle with my fellowmen,
Stay thou nearby, my steps to guide,
That I may in thy love abide.²⁷

Praying helps us to face trials in life. Prayer centers our attitudes precisely. With that focus we do not wander to the right or left through land mined with traps of temptation. Disciples do not flirt with danger at the jagged edge of disaster. Experienced mountain climbers do not lean toward the dangerous edge but toward safety, with ropes and other safeguards to secure them to those they trust. So it is with us. When we climb mountainous challenges of life, we should lean toward our Master and be yoked with Him, clinging tightly to the iron rod of the gospel, to family, and to trusted friends.

President David O. McKay taught this about edges: “Many of us through selfishness are lingering near the edge of the animal jungle where Nature’s law demands us to do everything with self in view.”²⁸

The Lord said, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”²⁹ I have learned that such faith gives emancipating power. Facing God first lets us decide firmly what we shall not do; then we are free to pursue what we ought to do.

Recently President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: “Love of God is the root of all virtue, of all goodness, of all strength of character, of all fidelity to do right. Love the Lord your God, and love His Son, and be ever grateful for their love for us. Whenever other love fades, there will be that shining, transcendent, everlasting love of God for each of us and the love of His Son, who gave His life for us.”³⁰

Brothers and sisters, race, nationality, occupation, or other interests need not stand in the way. All can look to the Lord. All can place Him first in their lives. Those who do so and remain faithful will qualify for His sublime promise: "Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am."³¹ This glorious destiny can be ours. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 37:47; see also Psalm 5:3; Alma 5:19; 37:37.
2. Exodus 20:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–19.
3. See Ephesians 2:19.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
5. See Joel 3:14.
6. Articles of Faith 1:5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:25.
8. What they speak "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost" represents the will of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, and the word of the Lord (Doctrine and Covenants 68:4).
9. Among the many, see Exodus 20:8; 31:15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Jarom 1:5; Mosiah 13:16; 18:23; Doctrine and Covenants 68:29.
10. See 1 Kings 18:21.
11. Isaiah 58:13–14.
12. Some of the many are Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 3 Nephi 12:28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6.
13. Report of the Ramsey Colloquium, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 Feb. 1994, A-18.
14. Philippians 3:19.
15. Romans 1:25.
16. Ezekiel 14:6.
17. The importance of looking up to the Lord is also emphasized in a vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith, dated January 21, 1836:
"I saw the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, who are now upon the earth, who hold the keys of this last ministry, in foreign lands, standing together in a circle, much fatigued, with their clothes tattered and feet swollen, with their eyes cast downward, and Jesus standing in their midst, and they did not behold Him. The Savior looked upon them and wept" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 107).
18. See Proverbs 3:5.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21, which teaches that any blessing from God is obtained by obedience to that law upon which the blessing is predicated.
20. See Alma 34:32.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
22. The Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 9:22 adds this insight: "When thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy."
23. Moroni 7:47.
24. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).
25. Mark 9:34–35; italics added. Another gospel writer phrased that truth in a similar way: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). In these scriptures, the word *servant* comes from the Greek noun *diakonos*, which means "one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master." *Diakonos* is the Greek word from which the English word *deacon* is derived.
26. See Acts 6:2.

27. *Hymns*, no. 158.
28. In Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 7. President James E. Faust issued this solemn warning:
 "Living on the edge can also mean being perilously close to the Bottomless Pit. . . .
 "Some of you may think that you will discover your strengths and abilities by living on the edge. . . . There will always be enough risks that will come to you naturally without your having to seek them out" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 46).
29. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
30. Address delivered at Ricks College regional conference, 29 Oct. 1995; reported in *Church News*, 2 Mar. 1996, 2.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1. He has also given many other promises, among which are:
 "Blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so

shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live" (D&C 45:46).

"I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

The chorus sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "High on the Mountain Top."

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

President Boyd K. Packer

Youth can avoid unseen dangers

These marvelous young people in this choir are typical of the young people that we meet all over the Church. How we love them. How grateful we are for you, our youth. *Nothing* is more precious than our children, our youth. And it is to you, our youth, that I speak.

Several years ago in Africa I learned how dangerously invisible crocodiles can be. I then warned our youth about unseen spiritual crocodiles lying in wait to destroy them.

Those invisible dangers have greatly increased in number, and now there are many kinds of them.

Some of them are like land mines hidden about in a field you must cross on

your way to maturity. Neighborhoods and schools, which once were safe, are no longer secure. Fortunately you have within you a spiritual power much like a mine detector. If you learn how it works, it will warn you of the presence of unseen crocodiles and mines, and you can avoid trouble.

Regulations of the Word of Wisdom

Three years after the organization of the Church, a revelation came which described our day in these prophetic words: "Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving

unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

The Word of Wisdom put restrictions on members of the Church. To this day those regulations apply to every member and to everyone who seeks to join the Church. They are so compelling that no one is to be baptized into the Church without first agreeing to live by them. No one will be called to teach or to lead without accepting them. When you want to go to the temple, you will be asked if you keep the Word of Wisdom. If you do not, you cannot go to the house of the Lord until you are fully worthy.

We know that young people generally don't like restrictions. Believe it or not, we were young once and we remember.

A resistance to anything that limits one's conduct has almost taken over society. Our whole social order could self-destruct over the obsession with freedom disconnected from responsibility, where choice is imagined to be somehow independent of consequences.

Young people, you must understand that there is something of colossal importance to justify the restrictions imposed by the Word of Wisdom!

While the revelation came first as a "greeting; not by commandment or constraint" (D&C 89:2), when members of the Church had had time to be taught the import of the revelation, succeeding Presidents of the Church declared it to be a commandment. And it was accepted by the Church as such.

"A principle with promise"

The Word of Wisdom was "given for a principle with promise" (D&C 89:3). That word *principle* in the revelation is a very important one. A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Generally principles are not spelled out in de-

tail. That leaves you free to find your way with an enduring truth, a principle, as your anchor.

Members write in asking if this thing or that is against the Word of Wisdom. It's well known that tea, coffee, liquor, and tobacco are against it. It has not been spelled out in more detail. Rather, we teach the principle together with the promised blessings. There are many habit-forming, addictive things that one can drink or chew or inhale or inject which injure both body and spirit which are not mentioned in the revelation.

Everything harmful is not specifically listed; arsenic, for instance—certainly bad, but not habit-forming! He who must be commanded in all things, the Lord said, "is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26).

In some cultures, native drinks are claimed to be harmless because they are not specifically mentioned in the revelation. Yet they draw members, particularly men, away from their families to parties which certainly offend the principle. Promises made in the revelation will be denied to the careless or the reckless.

Stay on the safe side

Obedience to counsel will keep you on the safe side of life.

The story is told of a king who was choosing between two drivers for his coach. He ordered each of them to drive his coach down a steep, winding road cut into a high cliff.

The first driver came down slowly, hugging the wall of the cliff. The second driver demonstrated great talent and ability. He raced down the mountain, with the coach so close at times that half the wheel was off the edge of the cliff.

The king was very thoughtful, then wisely chose the first man to drive his coach. It is best to stay on the safe side of things.

Use moderation in matters of health

The Word of Wisdom is “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints” (D&C 89:3). It is buttressed by other scriptures. They teach that the good things of the earth “are made for the benefit and the use of man, . . . yea,” the Lord said, “for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul, . . . to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:18–20).

Young people, learn to use moderation and common sense in matters of health and nutrition, and particularly in medication. Avoid being extreme or fanatical or becoming a faddist.

For example, the Word of Wisdom counsels us to eat meat sparingly (see D&C 89:12). Lest someone become extreme, we are told in another revelation that “whoso forbiddeth to [eat meat] is not ordained of God” (D&C 49:18).¹

Another scripture counsels, “Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; . . . cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124).

The promise of health

Honor the principle of the Word of Wisdom, and you will receive the promised blessings. “All saints,” the revelation promises, “who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments,” are promised that they “shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones” and “shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18, 20).

The Word of Wisdom does not promise you perfect health, but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.

I remember a blessing I received when I was serving in the military. It included counsel that’s good for every young person: “You have been given a body of such physical proportions and fitness as to enable your spirit to function through it. . . . You should cherish this as a great heritage. Guard [it] and protect it. Take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and [the] foundation of your character.” That counsel had great influence on me.

The promise of health for living the standard of the revelation is not limited to members of the Church. Tell your nonmember friends about the Word of Wisdom and urge them to live it.

The promise of revelation

And then there is a greater blessing promised in the Word of Wisdom. Those who obey it are promised that they “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19). This is the personal revelation through which you can detect invisible crocodiles or hidden mines or other dangers.

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost. “Know ye not,” Paul wrote, “that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

And the Lord said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

The promise of redemption

There’s a final promise in the revelation. Speaking again of those who keep and do and obey these commandments,

the Lord said, "I . . . give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21). That is a remarkable promise.

To understand it, we must turn to the time of Moses. The Israelites had been enslaved for 400 years. Moses came as their deliverer. He called forth plagues upon Egypt. The Pharaoh agreed each time to free the Israelites, but each time he reneged on his promise. Finally "the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go. . . . All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die" (Exodus 11:1, 5).

Moses told the Israelites to "take . . . a lamb . . . without blemish, a male of the first year. . . . Neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (Exodus 12:3, 5, 46; see also John 19:33).

They were to prepare the lamb as a feast and "take of the blood, and strike it on the . . . door post of the houses. . . . For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land . . . : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you. . . . And this day . . . ye shall keep . . . by an ordinance for ever" (Exodus 12:7, 12-14). "When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? . . . ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:26-27).

Surely, young people, you see the prophetic symbolism in the Passover. Christ was "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36), the Firstborn, male, without blemish. He was slain without breaking His bones, even though the soldiers were sent to do it.

But it is not from mortal death that we shall be spared in such a passover if we walk in obedience to these commandments, for each of us in time shall die. But there is spiritual death which you need not suffer. If you are obedient,

that spiritual death will pass over you, for "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," the revelation teaches (1 Corinthians 5:7).

While the Word of Wisdom requires strict obedience, in return it promises health, great treasures of knowledge, and that redemption bought for us by the Lamb of God, who was slain that we might be redeemed.

The law of sacrifice was fulfilled with the Crucifixion. The Lord instituted the sacrament in its place. That is the ordinance we shall keep forever! Young people, attend your meetings and partake of the sacrament.

Surely the Word of Wisdom was given so that you may keep the delicate, sensitive, spiritual part of your nature on proper alert. Learn to "listen" to your feelings. You will be guided and warned and taught and blessed.

Go forward with faith

Even though young life is always filled with uncertainties, young people, do not fear the future!

Your young dreams can be realized. All of your worthy, natural physical and emotional desires can be satisfied. You can find a companion to whom you can offer a body free from addiction, from depressants, from stimulants, and a mind sensitive to spiritual guidance and impressions.

You can be sealed together for time and for all eternity in a marriage covenant and express that love freely, which has as its consummate purpose the begetting of life, of children, of family, of happiness.

If you are one who's been wandering off course, now is the time to return. You can, you know. Young people, go forward with faith. You'll be led by the Spirit as was Nephi, "not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6).

Keep the Word of Wisdom. Seek worthy companions. Attend church faithfully. Never fail daily to seek for help through prayer. And I promise you that the way will be easier and you shall have a composure of mind and a confident attitude toward life and the future. You shall be warned of dangers and shall be guided through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

I bear witness that this revelation is a powerful protection to all members of the Church, particularly to you, the youth of the Church, as you face a life full of so many troubles and danger and uncertainties. But, young members of the Church, have faith. The Lord will be with you; you will be guided. I bear witness of Him and of His sacrifice and of His Atonement and of His love for you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. The context for verse 18 is verse 19: "For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air [are] ordained for the use of man for food." Section 49 was specifically directed to members of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (the Shakers) to cor-

rect some of their erroneous doctrines. One of their beliefs was not to eat flesh-meat or fish.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, has been our concluding speaker for this session of the conference.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," and the benediction will be given by Elder J. Richard Clarke of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder J. Richard Clarke offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 166th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, under the direction of Kevin Brower and Richard Robison, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watch-

ing in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Gene R. Cook, and Jay E. Jensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos H. Amado, Kenneth Johnson, and V. Dallas Merrell are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Richard Robison, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." The in-

vocation will be offered by Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."
Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed at the Love Jesus Offers Me." President James E. Faust will then present the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell

M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Because of his appointment to serve as president of Brigham Young University, we extend an honorable release to Bishop Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop, along with his counselors Bishop H. David Burton and Bishop Richard C. Edgley. Those who wish to join with us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Merrill J. Bateman, Dallas N. Archibald, Dieter F.

Uchtdorf, and Bruce C. Hafen. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: L. Edward Brown, Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, William Rolfe Kerr, Dennis E. Simmons, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco Viñas, and Richard B. Wirthlin. Those in favor, please signify. Opposed, if any, may also so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain H. David Burton as Presiding Bishop, with Richard C. Edgley as First Counselor and Keith B. McMullin as Second Counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently con-

stituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. We invite the new Seventies to take their places on the stand at this time.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Monson

Thank you, President Faust. We welcome all of the Brethren newly sustained.

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will now read the report of the Church Audit Committee. Then Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1995.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1995

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, operations, and departments, including the Church Auditing Department, and reports directly to the First Presidency. We have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and that safeguard assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including budgeting, accounting, and reporting, and the auditing systems and reports, for the year ended December 31, 1995.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the

Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

The Church Auditing Department, which is separate from the Church Audit Committee, is conducting an audit of the financial activities of the Church and its affiliated companies for the year ended December 31, 1995, in compliance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of computerized information systems for all Church operations. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors.

The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church operations and departments and reports its findings directly to the First Presidency.

Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practice and are audited by the Church Auditing Department or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms. The Church Auditing Department has established audit procedures for audits of local ecclesiastical units and also monitors local unit audit results and local unit expenditures.

Based on our review of financial and control policies and procedures and our review of all audit reports issued in 1995 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that in all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1995, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, chairman
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1995

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1995.

Church units

Stakes	2,150
Districts	699
Missions	307
Wards and branches	22,697
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	159

Church membership

Total membership	9,340,898
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1995 . . .	71,139
Converts baptized during 1995 . .	304,330

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	48,631
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Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Victor L. Brown, an emeritus General Authority; *Doris T. Sill*, widow of Elder Sterling W. Sill, an emeritus General Authority; *Wendell J. Ashton*, former managing director of the Church Public Communications Department and general secretary of the Deseret Sunday School Union; *Mark B. Garff*, former chairman of the Church Building Committee; *Rex E. Lee*, past president of Brigham Young University and former solicitor general of the United States; *George W. Romney*, former United States secretary of housing and urban development.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder David B. Haight

Amazing growth of the Church

I hope you had a burning in your heart and a quickening of your soul as you heard those statistics regarding the growth of the Church. Today is the anniversary of the organization of the Church 166 years ago today in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse in Fayette, New York. Just imagine what has happened since then! As we sang "I Stand All Amazed" (*Hymns*, no. 193), I thought about those in attendance in that farmhouse. They would "stand all amazed" if they could see what has happened to that little organization since its humble beginning on April 6, 1830. And the world in general would "stand all amazed" if they too realized our growth.

I'm glad the opening song was "The Morning Breaks" (*Hymns*, no. 1). Those words were written by Parley P. Pratt and were printed in the first issue of the *Millennial Star*, published in Manchester when that first group of missionaries sent by the Prophet Joseph Smith arrived in England. Those words were carefully penned by Parley P. Pratt so that the people out in the world would have some understanding as to who they were. As we sing those words, "The morning breaks, the shadows flee; lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!" we can envision that standard up on the flagpole, blowing in the wind. We can almost see that flag of freedom and liberty declaring the Restoration of the gospel to all the world. What a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect upon how the gospel has spread throughout the world during the 166 years since the Church was organized.

Our eighth generation

Brother F. Michael Watson has just read the statistical report to us. I want to make an addition to that report. Just within the last 30 minutes, my new great-

granddaughter was born. So, Michael, you can raise that number by one!

Elder LeGrand Richards put together a book titled *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, which has become a missionary tool throughout the world. In that book he wrote of an incident that happened to Dr. Andrew D. White, former president of Cornell University in New York and later the United States ambassador to Germany.

While he was United States foreign minister to Russia in 1892, Dr. White had an occasion to spend some time with Count Leo Tolstoi. Leo Tolstoi was a Russian statesman, writer, and social reformer. (I want you to remember that—social reformer. He had grown up in czarist Russia and had some idea and understanding as to how a country and a people could be oppressed.)

During their visit, Leo Tolstoi said to Dr. White, "I wish you would tell me about your American religion."

Dr. White explained that there were a number of religions in America.

Count Tolstoi said, "I want to know about the *American* religion. . . . The Church to which I refer . . . is commonly known as the Mormon Church."

Dr. White said, "I know very little concerning them."

Count Tolstoi said, "Dr. White, I am greatly surprised. [They] teach the people not only of Heaven and its attendant glories, but how to live so that their social and economic relations with each other are placed on a sound basis. . . . If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generations, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known" (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. [1966], 435–36).

I'm just reminding all of you here today that the little great-granddaughter born to us today is part of the eighth

generation of people in our family who have believed and accepted the gospel that we declare to be right and to be true.

Feelings when called 26 years ago

A short time ago I stood in a family circle while the husband of one of our granddaughters blessed their new little son, Mark. As he blessed little Mark, he prayed that Mark would someday go on a mission and, when he returned, find a sweet, young companion and be sealed in the temple. As he pronounced these blessings upon little Mark, I had the desire that he might know what I know and feel what I feel about some of the spiritual blessings that have entered into my life. I desired that his life would also be filled with spiritual experiences similar to one I had 26 years ago today when I was called to be an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On that same day, Elder Boyd K. Packer was called to the Quorum of the Twelve.

I remember the details well. I was called to the First Presidency's office to meet with President Joseph Fielding Smith. His name would be presented the next day for sustaining as the new President and prophet of the Church, just as we have done today with President Hinckley. Harold B. Lee was to be sustained as the First Counselor and N. Eldon Tanner as the Second Counselor. They spent a few moments with me, extending the call, and then reminded me that the next morning my name would be read in the conference.

After that call was extended to me, I walked down the granite steps of the Administration Building. I felt amazement and wonder. *How could this happen? How could this come to me?* As I walked around the block, I thought and wondered about the changes that would come into my life now. *How would I ever measure up to the responsibility that would now rest upon me? How could I go*

out and represent this great and glorious organization out in the world?

I was so overcome with my feelings as I walked around the block that I didn't want to meet anyone I knew. I just wanted to find my wife, Ruby, and tell her what had happened. I went up to the ninth floor of the Hotel Utah, where Ruby was visiting with some family. I remember knocking on the door and opening it just a couple of inches so I could motion for her to come out. Of course, she wondered what was happening and came out into the hall.

I took her by the hand, and as we walked along the hallway, all I could do was squeeze her hand. I was so overcome with what had happened that I had trouble even getting the words out to tell her about it. Finally she stopped me and said, "Well, say something." Then I looked at her, put my hands on her shoulders, and told her what had happened. She started to cry. The two of us stood there with our arms around one another and people walking by wondering who those silly boobs were crying in the hallway. But we didn't pay any attention to the traffic because something momentous was happening to us. Our lives had been changed.

On the next day, a day like this, my name was read to be sustained and I was asked to come up and take one of these red chairs. I did so in all amazement. And then the Tabernacle Choir sang "O Divine Redeemer." I thought my heart would break in the pleading of those words: "Remember not, remember not, O Lord, my sins."

Witness to the revelation on priesthood

I would hope someday that our great-grandson Mark and others of our posterity would have similar spiritual experiences and that they would feel the spiritual power and influence of this gospel. I hope that Mark and others will have opportunities such as I had when I

was in the temple when President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation regarding the priesthood. I was the junior member of the Quorum of the Twelve. I was there. I was there with the outpouring of the Spirit in that room so strong that none of us could speak afterward. We just left quietly to go back to the office. No one could say anything because of the powerful outpouring of the heavenly spiritual experience.

Just a few hours after the announcement was made to the press, I was assigned to attend a stake conference in Detroit, Michigan. When my plane landed in Chicago, I noticed an edition of the *Chicago Tribune* on the newsstand. The headline in the paper said, "Mormons Give Blacks Priesthood." And the subheading said, "President Kimball Claims to Have Received a Revelation." I bought a copy of the newspaper. I stared at one word in that subheading—*claims*. It stood out to me just like it was in red neon. As I walked along the hallway to make my plane connection, I thought, *Here I am now in Chicago walking through this busy airport, yet I was a witness to this revelation. I was there. I witnessed it. I felt that heavenly influence. I was part of it.* Little did the editor of that newspaper realize the truth of that revelation when he wrote, "... Claims to

Have Received a Revelation." Little did he know, or the printer, or the man who put the ink on the press, or the one who delivered the newspaper—little did any of them know that it was truly a revelation from God. Little did they know what I knew because I was a witness to it.

God lives. He is our Father. We are His children. He loves us. Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Savior, our Redeemer. He is our advocate with the Father. He is the one who died and suffered great agony, great humiliation, and great pain for us. The Restoration of the gospel is true. Someday we'll know of the greatness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. All this work is true. I leave you my love and my witness, and I pray that you will live and raise your own families in such a way that you will be part of the great army needed to carry the message of hope and salvation to all the world. I leave my love and witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to our beloved Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Variety amid constancy

Recently I stood on the north shore of a beautiful Pacific island gazing out to sea at daybreak. I was fascinated by the regularity with which the gigantic waves consistently moved forward to break on the shoreline. It reminded me of the constancy of the plan of the Lord, with its fixed, eternal law, and the security of enduring justice and the tenderness

of mercy when earned by obedience. I noticed that each wave would crest at a different point on the horizon to find its unique path to shore. Some cascaded over rocks, leaving rivulets of foaming, white water. Others burst on the shore in individual patterns. They slid up the moistened sand with playful frothy edges, then bubbled and swirled as they receded.

I thought of the unending variety of possibilities the Lord has provided for us. We have so much freedom, so many opportunities to develop our unique personalities and talents, our individual memories, our personalized contributions. Since there would be no further opportunity to observe the majestic sea, I tried to imagine the glorious panorama the brilliant sun would later create. As I watched this magnificent scene in reverence, a window formed in the clouds; the glistening rays of the rising sun broke through the overcast sky, transforming everything with its luminescence, its color, its life. It was as if the Lord wanted to share an additional blessing, a symbol of the light of His teachings that gives brilliance and hope to everyone it touches. Tears of gratitude formed for this wondrous world in which we live, for the extraordinary beauty our Heavenly Father so freely shares with all who are willing to see. Truly, life is beautiful.

Appreciate the beauty of life

Do you take time to discover each day how beautiful your life can be? How long has it been since you watched the sun set—the departing rays kissing the clouds, trees, hills, and lowlands good night, sometimes tranquilly, sometimes with exuberant bursts of color and form?

What of the wonder of a cloudless night when the Lord unveils the marvels of His heavens—the twinkling stars, the moonlight rays—to ignite our imagination with His greatness and glory?

How captivating to watch a seed planted in fertile soil germinate, gather strength, and send forth a tiny, seemingly insignificant sprout. Patiently it begins to grow and develop its own character, led by the genetic code the Lord has provided to guide its development. With care it surely will become what it is destined to be: a lily, crowned with grace and beauty; a fragrant spearmint plant; a peach; an avocado; or

a beautiful blossom with unique delicacy, hue, and fragrance.

When last did you observe a tiny rosebud form? Each day it develops new and impressive character, more promise of beauty until it becomes a majestic rose.

You are one of the noblest of God's creations. His intent is that your life be gloriously beautiful regardless of your circumstances. As you are grateful and obedient, you can become all that God intends you to be.

Joy in life depends on trust in God

Sadness, disappointment, and severe challenge are *events* in life, not life itself. I do not minimize how hard some of these events are. They can extend over a long period of time, but they should not be allowed to become the confining center of everything you do. The Lord inspired Lehi to declare the fundamental truth, "Men are, that they might have joy."¹ That is a conditional statement: "they *might* have joy." It is not conditional for the Lord. His intent is that each of us finds joy. It will not be conditional for you as you obey the commandments, have faith in the Master, and do the things that are necessary to have joy here on earth.

Your joy in life depends upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His holy Son, your conviction that their plan of happiness truly can bring you joy. Pondering their doctrine will let you enjoy the beauties of this earth and enrich your relationships with others. It will lead you to the comforting, strengthening experiences that flow from prayer to Father in Heaven and the answers He gives in return.

Perspective and patience

A pebble held close to the eye appears to be a gigantic obstacle. Cast on the ground, it is seen in perspective. Likewise, problems or trials in our lives

need to be viewed in the perspective of scriptural doctrine. Otherwise they can easily overtake our vision, absorb our energy, and deprive us of the joy and beauty the Lord intends us to receive here on earth. Some people are like rocks thrown into a sea of problems. They are drowned by them. Be a cork. When submerged in a problem, fight to be free to bob up to serve again with happiness.

You are here on earth for a divine purpose. It is not to be endlessly entertained or to be constantly in full pursuit of pleasure. You are here to be tried, to prove yourself so that you can receive the additional blessings God has for you.² The tempering effect of patience is required.³ Some blessings will be delivered here in this life; others will come beyond the veil.

The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. That progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether initially it be to your individual liking or not. When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience. If you question everything you are asked to do, or dig in your heels at every unpleasant challenge, you make it harder for the Lord to bless you.⁴

Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be.⁵ That path leads to glorious joy and happiness.

Live with joy amid adversity

Learn from inspiring individuals who have made peace with their challenges

and live with joy amid adversity. A lovely woman with an aggressive terminal disease consistently found joy in life. She understood the plan of happiness, had received the temple ordinances, and was doing her best to qualify for the promised blessings. Her personal journal records:

"It is a beautiful fall day. I picked up the mail and sat down on the swing. I was so happy and content in the warm sun, the sweet smell of nature and the trees around me. I just sat and gloried in the fact that I am still alive on this beautiful earth. . . . The Lord is so good to me. How I thank him that I am still here and feeling so good. I am soooooo happy I just want to shout and dance through this beautiful house as the sun streams into the big windows. I love being alive."

A valiant mother courageously fighting a debilitating illness spent untold hours laboriously completing a large, challenging needlepoint work of art. It was a gift to a couple experiencing trials. For the couple it is a priceless treasure, a constant reminder of the precious fruits of resolute effort in the face of adversity, an enduring message of hope bound in the bonds of pure love and willing sacrifice.

Find joy in what you *do* have

Children teach us how to find joy even under the most challenging circumstances. Children haven't yet learned to be depressed by concentrating on the things they don't have. They find joy in what is available to them. I remember a small boy playing along a riverbank. He had tied a piece of fishing line to the ends of two discarded soft-drink cans. He threw one can over a limb, then filled it with water. He would pull on the other can, then let it go. The weight of the first can would draw the second one up as it fell. He laughed and danced with glee.

Simple, rejuvenating experiences surround us. They can be safety valves to

keep the tension down and the spirit up. Don't concentrate on what you don't have or have lost. The Lord promised the obedient to share all that He possesses with them. You may temporarily lack here, but in the next life, if you prove yourself worthy by living valiantly, a fullness will be your blessing.

Find the compensatory blessings in your life when, in the wisdom of the Lord, He deprives you of something you very much want. To the sightless or hearing impaired, He sharpens the other senses. To the ill, He gives patience, understanding, and increased appreciation for others' kindness. With the loss of a dear one, He deepens the bonds of love, enriches memories, and kindles hope in a future reunion. You will discover compensatory blessings when you willingly accept the will of the Lord and exercise faith in Him.⁶

To the afflicted people of Alma, the Lord said:

"I will also ease the burdens . . . that even you cannot feel them upon your backs . . . ; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

"And . . . the burdens . . . were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."⁷

Being creative will help you enjoy life

Attempt to be creative for the joy it brings. After their noble husbands were called home, Sisters Camilla Kimball, Amelia McConkie, and Helen Richards learned to paint. They not only leave legacies of art, but they will never see a sunset, a face, or a tree the same again. They now perceive subtle nuances of color and form and rejoice in the abounding beauty around them.

Select something like music, dance, sculpture, or poetry. Being creative will help you enjoy life. It engenders a spirit of gratitude. It develops latent talent, sharpens your capacity to reason, to act, and to find purpose in life. It dispels loneliness and heartache. It gives a renewal, a spark of enthusiasm, and zest for life.

Service—a key to happiness

Willing service to others is a key to enduring happiness. President Kimball said: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other."⁸

I know of a woman who was joyously happy. Each morning she would ask her Father in Heaven to lead her to someone she could help. That sincere prayer was answered time and again. The burdens of many were eased and their lives brightened. She was blessed continually for being an instrument directed by the Lord.

Difficulty can be turned to growth

I know that every difficulty we face in life, even those that come from our own negligence or even transgression, can be turned by the Lord into growth experiences, a virtual ladder upward.⁹ I certainly do not recommend transgression as a path to growth. It is painful, difficult, and so totally unnecessary. It is far wiser and so much easier to move forward in righteousness. But through proper repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments, even the disappointment that comes from transgression can be converted into a return to happiness.

Make a list of things you can do for happiness, such as:

- Ponder the scriptures to understand the plan of happiness.
- Pray with faith in Jesus Christ.

- Love and serve others.
- Receive the temple ordinances.

Return to bless others.

- Listen to the prophet and obey his counsel.
- Be grateful for what you have.
- Smile more.

Your list will provide keys to contentment and joy.

Challenge is temporary, happiness eternal

A famous Brazilian song repeats a falsehood many believe: Sadness never ends, but happiness does. I witness that with faith in the Savior and obedience to His teachings, happiness never ends, but sadness does.

No matter how difficult something you or a loved one faces, it should not take over your life and be the center of all your interest. Challenges are growth experiences, temporary scenes to be played out on the background of a pleasant life. Don't become so absorbed in a single event that you can't think of anything else or care for yourself or for those who depend upon you. Remember, much like the mending of the body, the healing of some spiritual and emotional challenges takes time.

The Lord has said, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days."¹⁰ As you are patient, you will come to understand what the statement "I am with thee" means. God's love brings peace and joy.

Your faith in Jesus Christ gives life enduring meaning. Remember you are on a journey to exaltation. Sometimes you have experiences that yield more happiness than others, but it all has purpose with the Lord.¹¹

As a witness of the Savior, I exhort you to forgive any you feel may have of-

fended you. If there is transgression, repent of it, that the Master may heal you.

Thank your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son for the plan of happiness and the gospel principles upon which it is based. Be grateful for the ordinances and the covenants they have provided. I solemnly testify they have power to crown your life with peace and joy, to give it purpose and meaning. You will learn that sadness and disappointment are temporary. Happiness is everlastingly eternal because of Jesus Christ. I solemnly witness that He lives, that He loves you, and that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.
2. See Abraham 3:25.
3. See Mosiah 3:19.
4. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:26-32.
6. See Orson F. Whitney, quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 98.
7. Mosiah 24:14-15.
8. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
9. See Isaiah 40:31.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 24:8.
11. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 177.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Scott lives the sermon he just delivered.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," and Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Elder F. Burton Howard

Playing hide-and-seek in the car

When my wife and I were first married, my parents lived in another state. During a break in our university schedule, we decided to go visit them.

We made sandwiches, packed the car, and prepared a bed in the backseat for our young son so that he could rest during the 10-hour trip. After a full day in the car, we were beginning to get on each other's nerves. The preschooler never slept and seemed to gather energy as the day wore on. We knew that if he would just close his eyes and be quiet for a while, he would fall asleep.

After sundown, with two hours of travel still to go, we decided to play a game. The purpose of the game was to try to get an exhausted youngster to sleep. We called it hide-and-seek. Have you ever tried to play hide-and-seek in a car? Let me tell you how we did it. We said to the small boy in back, "Let's play hide-and-seek." He enthusiastically agreed. We said, "Close your eyes and don't open them until we call you. We need time to hide."

The game started. A front-seat passenger would crouch down in the seat and 10 or 15 seconds later would call, "OK." Our son would bound over the seat and say, "Aha, I found you!" We would say, "Next time we will hide better. Close your eyes again." A minute or more would go by. Then we would call, and again he would energetically climb over the seat to find us. Finally we said, "We have a really good place to hide this time. It will take longer. Close your eyes and we will call you."

A minute, two minutes, five minutes went by. We drove along in silence. The tranquillity was marvelous. We must have traveled 15 miles before we began to whisper quiet congratulations to ourselves on the success of our devious game. Then, from out of the backseat,

came the sobbing voice of a heartbroken little boy. "You didn't call me, and you said you would."

"You didn't do what you agreed to do." What a terrible accusation. It was a defining moment in our lives. We knew that we could never play that game again.

Live up to commitments

Church members commit to do many things. We agree to serve one another, to mourn with those that mourn, to comfort those that stand in need of comfort. We promise to visit each other. We make covenants. We agree to share the gospel and do vicarious work for the dead. And just like that incident in the car so many years ago, we sometimes fail to do what we have agreed to do.

Our justifications are many. We say we will do it later. We have something more important to do right now. We don't feel well or we don't feel qualified or we don't want to be fanatical about it.

When I think of those who want to postpone performance until another time, I remember a question someone once asked at a stake conference. A man said, "Brother Howard, do you know why we can never get more than 83 percent home teaching in the Church?" I said, "No, why?" He said, "Because no one wants to go on Halloween and New Year's Eve."

When I hear someone say they can't serve because they don't feel well, I remember a stake I once visited in Mexico. The stake president spoke about a lesson he learned from his wife. He said that a week before the conference, he had scheduled some home teaching visits but came home from work and didn't feel well. He told his wife that he guessed he wouldn't go home teaching because he was sick. Her reply to him was, "Go sick!" And he went.

I once talked with a man who said, "I know I could do a little more, but no one wants to be a fanatic." His statement reminded me of a definition I heard once: "A fanatic is a person who does what he thinks the Lord would do if only He had all the facts." But He who really does know all things isn't a fanatic; neither are those who do what He would have them do.

When I listen to people say they have something more important to do, I wonder what it could possibly be. What could be more important than keeping a commitment we have made with the Lord?

As I travel the Church I often ask stake presidents what their concerns are and what they perceive to be their greatest need. Frequently the reply is, "We have wonderful people. Some of them just need to be more committed and more dedicated. They need to be more anxiously engaged in the work."

The Church does have many needs, and one of them is for more people who will just do what they have agreed to do, people who will show up for work and stay all day, who will quietly, patiently, and consistently do what they have agreed to do—for as long as it takes, and who will not stop until they have finished.

The commitment of Abraham's servant

One of my heroes has always been the servant of Abraham who was sent to find a wife for Isaac. We do not know his name. We do not know much about his life, but we know a great deal about his character. It was he who governed everything that Abraham had. He was trustworthy and he was trusted. The day came when Abraham put into the care of this servant the most important matter of all—the exaltation of his son.

He wanted Isaac to be an heir of the covenant which he had made with the

Lord. He knew that the blessings of that covenant could not be realized if Isaac didn't marry a good and worthy woman who believed in God. No woman in the land of Canaan was capable of being the mother of Israel. So Abraham asked his servant to promise that he would not permit his son to marry a Canaanite. Instead Abraham sent him to the land of his fathers to find a wife for Isaac.

The servant accepted the commitment and set out on his journey. He traveled many days. He must have encountered trials and hardships. When he finally arrived at his destination, he found many young women there. He devised a test to see which of them was foreordained to be Isaac's wife. By exercising his faith, he met Rebekah and arrived at the home of her family and was befriended by them. They invited him to dinner. After days in the desert, and despite his hunger and thirst, this faithful servant said, "I will not eat, until I have told mine errand" (Genesis 24:33).

So it was. He explained the purpose of his journey and his oath to Abraham. One simple statement conveyed his faithfulness and humility. "I am Abraham's servant," he said (Genesis 24:34). The kinsfolk wanted a 10-day celebration. The servant replied, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master" (Genesis 24:56).

Many would have tarried. Others would have justified unwinding a little by saying that the journey had been long or that they were tired or hungry or thirsty. Some, not wanting to appear too zealous, would have stayed.

A few, not understanding the significance of the errand, might have tried to talk Abraham out of the assignment, claiming that it was foolishness to travel so far in search of a wife. Some would not have had the faith necessary to discover which of all of the young women of the city was the chosen one. Yet this ser-

vant did. He knew how to magnify his calling and accomplish that which he had promised his master. He understood a very important truth. Promises are not just pretty words. Promises have eternal consequences.

A covenant-keeping people

We are a covenant people. If there is a distinguishing feature about members of the Church, it is that we make covenants. We need to be known as a covenant-keeping people as well. Making promises is easy, but to follow through and do what we have promised is another matter. That involves staying the course, being constant and steadfast. It means keeping the faith and being faithful to the end despite success or failure, doubt or discouragement. It is drawing near to the Lord with all our hearts. It is doing whatever we promise to do with all

our might—even when we might not feel like it.

I once attended a funeral service with Elder M. Russell Ballard. A statement he made there has remained with me to this day. He said, "Life isn't over for a Latter-day Saint until he or she is safely dead, with their testimony still burning brightly." "Safely dead"—what a challenging concept. Brothers and sisters, we will not be safe until we have given our hearts to the Lord—until we have learned to do what we have promised.

May we do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

We all welcome these newly sustained Brethren and their wives to the sweet association enjoyed by the General Authorities and their families.

A handful of meal and a little oil

In response to King Ahab's great wickedness, the Lord, through the prophet Elijah, sealed the heavens, that neither dew nor rain should fall throughout all the land of Israel. The drought that ensued and the famine that followed affected Elijah himself as well as untold others in the process.

Ravens did bring Elijah bread and meat to eat, but unless ravens carry more than I think they do, this was not a gourmet meal. And ere long the brook Cherith, near which he hid and from which he drank, ran dry. And so it went for three years.

As the prophet prepared for a final confrontation with Ahab, God commanded Elijah to go to the village of Zarephath, where, He said, He had commanded a widow woman to sustain him.

As he entered the city in his weary condition, he met his benefactress, who was undoubtedly as weak and wasted as he. Perhaps almost apologetically the thirsty traveler importuned, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." As she turned to meet his request, Elijah added even more strain to the supplication. "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand [also]."

Elijah's pitiful circumstances were obvious. Furthermore, the widow had been prepared by the Lord for this request. But in her own weakened and dispirited condition, the prophet's last entreaty was more than this faithful little

woman could bear. In her hunger and fatigue and motherly anguish she cried out to the stranger, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks [which tells us how small her fire needed to be], that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

But Elijah was on the Lord's errand. Israel's future—including the future of this very widow and her son—was at stake. His prophetic duty made him more bold than he might normally have wanted to be.

"Fear not," he said to her, "but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

Then this understated expression of faith—as great, under these circumstances, as any I know in the scriptures. The record says simply, "And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah." Perhaps uncertain what the cost of her faith would be not only to herself but to her son as well, she first took her small loaf to Elijah, obviously trusting that if there were not enough bread left over, at least she and her son would have died in an act of pure charity. The story goes on, of course, to a very happy ending for her and for her son.¹

An appeal for the disadvantaged

This woman is like another widow whom Christ admired so much—she who cast her farthing, her two mites, into the synagogue treasury and thereby gave more, Jesus said, than all others who had given that day.²

Unfortunately the names of these two women are not recorded in the scrip-

tures, but if I am ever so privileged in the eternities to meet them, I would like to fall at their feet and say, "Thank you. Thank you for the beauty of your lives, for the wonder of your example, for the godly spirit within you prompting such 'charity out of a pure heart.'"³

Indeed I wish to do something a little more immediate in their behalf today. I wish to speak for the widow, the fatherless, the disadvantaged and down-trodden, the hungry, the homeless, and the cold. I wish to speak for those God has always loved and spoken of in an urgent way.⁴ I wish to speak of the poor.

Amulek's discourse to the Zoramites

There is a particularly reprehensible moment in the Book of Mormon in which a group of vain and unchristian Zoramites, after climbing atop their Rameumptom and declaring their special standing before God, immediately proceed to cast the poor from their synagogues, synagogues these needy had labored with their own hands to build. They were cast out, the revelation says, simply because of their poverty. In a penetrating scriptural line that forever speaks to the real plight and true pain of the impoverished, the Book of Mormon says, "They were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart." Indeed they were "poor in heart, because of their poverty as to the things of the world."⁵

Directly countering the arrogance and exclusivity which the Zoramites had shown these people, Amulek gives a stirring sermon on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Teaching that Christ's gift would be "infinite and eternal," an offering to every man, woman, and child who would ever live in this world, he also bore witness of the mercy of such a gift. He listed all the ways and all the places in which people should pray for that atoning mercy, "for your welfare," he said, "and also for the welfare of those who are around you."⁶

But this masterful discourse on the Atonement is not finished. With great directness, Amulek says of these fervent prayers, "Do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have [it], to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."⁷ If this is the message to those who had so little, what must it mean for us?

King Benjamin's discourse

Amulek uses here precisely the same theo-logic that King Benjamin had used 50 years earlier. After teaching the people of Zarahemla of the Fall of Adam and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, Benjamin saw his congregation literally fall to the ground, viewing themselves in a state of great need, viewing themselves, he said, as less than the dust of the earth. (The difference between this response and that of the Rameumptom set goes without saying.)

"And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified."⁸

With these people so teachably humble, and with mercy, that loveliest of words, on every lip and tongue, King Benjamin says of the Atonement and the remission of sins:

"If God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, . . . O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another."

"Succor those that stand in need of your succor; . . . administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need."

"Are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have?"

"For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins," King Benjamin concludes, "ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants."⁹

Caring the way the Savior cared

We may not yet be the Zion of which our prophets foretold and toward which the poets and priests of Israel have pointed us, but we long for it and we keep working toward it. I do not know whether a full implementation of such a society can be realized until Christ comes, but I know that when He did come to the Nephites, His majestic teachings and ennobling spirit led to the happiest of all times, a time in which "there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift."¹⁰ That blessed circumstance was, I suppose, achieved on only one other occasion of which we know—the city of Enoch, where "they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."¹¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith had such a grand view of our possibilities, a view given him by the revelations of God. He knew that the real task was in being more Christlike—caring the way the Savior cared, loving the way He loved, "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor," the scripture says, "and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God."¹²

That was what Jacob in the Book of Mormon had taught—that “after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.”¹³

I pay tribute to all of you, to all who do so much and care so deeply and labor with “the intent to do good.” So many are so generous. I know that some of you are struggling to make ends meet in your own lives and still you find something to share. As King Benjamin cautioned his people, it is not intended that we run faster than we have strength, and all things should be done in order.¹⁴ I love you, and your Heavenly Father loves you for all you are trying to do.

Look for ways to help others

Furthermore, I know that a talk in general conference is not going to cut through the centuries of temporal inequity that have plagued humankind, but I also know that the gospel of Jesus Christ holds the answer to every social and political and economic problem this world has ever faced. And I know we can each do something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithe and give our fast and freewill offerings, according to our circumstances. And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don't have money, and we can give love when our time runs out. We can share the loaves we have and trust God that the cruse of oil will not fail.

“And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both

male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.”¹⁵

How much that passage from the first chapter of Alma sounds like the wonder that was Nauvoo. Said the Prophet Joseph in that blessed time: “Respecting how much a man . . . shall give . . . we have no special instructions . . . ; he is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them.”¹⁶

Remember what the Book of Mormon taught us. It is difficult enough to be poor in material goods, but the greater pain is in the heavy heart, the dwindling hope, the damaged dreams, the parental anguish, the childhood disappointment that almost always attend such circumstances.

Neighbors save the Hendricks family

I began with a story of diminishing cornmeal. May I conclude with another. Amidst the terrible hostilities in Missouri that would put the Prophet in Liberty Jail and see thousands of Latter-day Saints driven from their homes, Sister Drusilla Hendricks and her invalid husband, James, who had been shot by enemies of the Church in the Battle of Crooked River, arrived with their children at a hastily shaped dugout in Quincy, Illinois, to live out the spring of that harrowing year.

Within two weeks the Hendrickses were on the verge of starvation, having only one spoonful of sugar and a saucerful of cornmeal remaining in their possession. In the great tradition of LDS women, Drusilla made mush out of it for James and the children, thus stretching its contents as far as she could make it go. When that small offering was consumed by her famished family, she

washed everything, cleaned their little dugout as thoroughly as she could, and quietly waited to die.

Not long thereafter the sound of a wagon brought Drusilla to her feet. It was their neighbor Reuben Allred. He said he had a feeling they were out of food, so on his way into town he'd had a sack of grain ground into meal for them.

Shortly thereafter Alexander Williams arrived with two bushels of meal on his shoulder. He told Drusilla that he'd been extremely busy but the Spirit had whispered to him that "Brother Hendricks' family is suffering, so I dropped everything and came [running]." ¹⁷

May God, who has blessed all of us so mercifully and many of us so abundantly, bless us with one thing more. May He bless us to hear the often silent cries of the sorrowing and the afflicted, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, the poor. Indeed may He bless us to hear the whispering of the Holy Spirit when any neighbor anywhere "is suffering," and to "drop everything and come running." I pray in the name of the captain of the poor, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 1 Kings 17:1-24.
2. See Mark 12:41-44.
3. 1 Timothy 1:5.

4. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:11.
5. Alma 32:3-4; italics added.
6. See Alma 34:14, 17-27.
7. Alma 34:28.
8. Mosiah 4:2.
9. Mosiah 4:21, 16, 19, 26.
10. 4 Nephi 1:2-3.
11. Moses 7:18.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.
13. Jacob 2:19.
14. See Mosiah 4:27.
15. Alma 1:30.
16. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732.
17. Drusilla Dorris Hendricks, "Historical Sketch of James Hendricks and Drusilla Dorris Hendricks," Historical Department, Archives Division, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, typescript, 19-23.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

The choir will now sing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," after which Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Faith of the pioneers

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, it's a great privilege for me to stand at this pulpit and welcome into the ranks of the General Authorities these new Brethren. We've come together in this historic Tabernacle and across the world "to speak one with another con-

cerning the welfare of [our] souls"¹ and to "feast upon the words of Christ."²

I speak to you today of the faith of our pioneer forefathers. We can attribute much of the remarkable progress of the Church and of this state of Utah to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We stand in awe of their resolve and tenacity in holding fast to their convic-

tions despite the obstacles they had to overcome.

Faith in the Savior

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation principle of the gospel and the basis of all righteousness. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "faith is the assurance . . . of the existence of things . . . not seen."³ The scriptures define faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."⁴

We delight in our faith in our Savior today. We testify to the world that "the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."⁵ As members of the Lord's Church and as faithful advocates of His restored gospel, we declare soberly that God lives, that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Tomorrow is Easter, a day to ponder the mission of Jesus Christ, the First-born Son of our Heavenly Father. The Atonement, including the Resurrection of the Savior, provides immortality and the possibility of eternal life for all of our Father's children. How grateful we should be for these blessings.

Faith in the prophets

We declare gladly to all who have "ears to hear"⁶ that the Lord, "knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon [His] servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments"⁷ to restore the fullness of the gospel that the Saints of earlier days had.

We testify "from the top of the mountains"⁸ that President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet on earth today. Because of our faith in our prophet, Latter-day Saints echo the words of the Apostle Peter: "We have therefore a

more sure knowledge of the word of prophecy, to which word of prophecy ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."⁹ The light of divine revelation shines forth from a living prophet to brighten a darkened world.

Restoration and growth of the Church

From the beginning of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in America, religious freedom has allowed the Church to flourish. Roots sunk deep into the rich soil of obedience and sacrifice have borne good fruit. Generations of faithful members have forged a firm foundation. From this base of strength "shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth."¹⁰ President Joseph F. Smith, who came across the plains as a boy and who knew much of adversity in his life, declared his testimony as follows:

"The kingdom of God is here to grow, to spread abroad, to take root in the earth, and to abide where the Lord has planted it by His own power and by His own word, in the earth, never more to be destroyed or to cease, but to continue until the purposes of the Almighty shall be accomplished, every whit that has been spoken of by the mouths of the holy prophets since the world began."¹¹

President Hinckley noted that "the church is growing in a marvelous and wonderful way. It is spreading over the Earth in a miraculous manner." He explained that one of the reasons for this growth is that "we have a demanding religion. We have great expectations concerning our people. We have standards that we expect them to live by, and that is one of the things that attracts people to this church: It stands as an anchor in a world of shifting values."¹²

Pioneers' faith built the foundation

The exciting global growth of the Church has focused our attention on the prophesied glorious future of the kingdom. At the same time that we look ahead with optimism, we should pause and look back on the faith of our humble pioneer forefathers. Their faith built the foundation on which the Church continues to flourish.

During February of this year, citizens in Nauvoo and communities across Iowa commemorated the 150th anniversary of the exodus of the Saints. In 1846 more than 10,000 left the thriving city that had been built on the banks of the Mississippi River. With faith in prophetic leaders, those early Church members left their "City Beautiful" and struck off into the wilderness of the American frontier. They did not know exactly where they were going, precisely how many miles lay ahead, how long the journey would take, or what the future held in store for them. But they *did know* they were led by the Lord and His servants. Their faith sustained them. They hoped "for things which [were] not seen, which are true."¹³ Like Nephi of old, they were "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [they] should do."¹⁴

Fearing more of the mob violence that had claimed the lives of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844, Brigham Young, leading the Church as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, announced in September 1845 that the Saints would leave Nauvoo in the spring of 1846. Most of those in Nauvoo believed fully that when Brigham Young announced that they must leave, they were hearing what the Lord wanted them to do. They responded in faith to the direction of the Lord. Throughout the fall and winter months of 1845-46, Church members set about vigorously making preparations for the journey.

Faith of Lydia Knight

When Newel Knight informed his wife, Lydia, that the Saints would have to leave Nauvoo and move yet again, she responded with tenacious faith, saying, "Well, there's nothing to discuss. Our place is with the Kingdom of God. Let us at once set about making preparations to leave."¹⁵ Brother Knight had moved his family several times already as many of the Saints had moved from New York to Ohio to Missouri and to Illinois. Lydia Knight's devoted submission to what she knew was God's will typifies powerfully the faith of those heroic early Saints. With their faith in mind, the words of a familiar hymn take on added meaning:

Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
Oh, how our hearts beat high with
joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death!¹⁶

Faith amid trials

Though winter's chill was not yet past, heightened fears of mob attacks and swirling rumors of government intervention compelled President Young to set things in motion to get the Saints under way. He directed the first company of pioneer families to leave Nauvoo on February 4, 1846, a cold winter day. They drove their laden wagons and their livestock down Parley Street—a street that became known as the "Street of Tears"—to a landing where they were ferried across the river to Iowa. Chunks of ice floating in the river crunched against the sides of the flatboats and barges that carried the wagons across the Mississippi. A few weeks later, temperatures dropped even further and wagons could cross the river more easily over a bridge of ice.

Sister Wirthlin and I visited Nauvoo in early March this year. The weather was

bitterly cold. As we stood in the chilling wind, looking out across the broad expanse of the Mississippi, we felt a deeper sense of appreciation and gratitude for those Saints as they left their beloved city. We wondered how they ever survived. What a sacrifice to leave behind so much for the uncertain future that lay ahead! No wonder so many tears were shed as the fleeing pioneers drove their wagons rumbling down Parley Street to cross the river with no hope of ever returning to their "City Beautiful."

Once across the river, they camped temporarily at Sugar Creek before starting their trek west toward the Rocky Mountains. The journey, which historian H. H. Bancroft described as a migration without "parallel in the world's history,"¹⁷ had begun.

When President Brigham Young joined the departing pioneers at their campsite in Iowa on February 15, 1846, the Lord revealed to him to begin organizing a modern "Camp of Israel." On the first of March the advance company began its push westward across Iowa. Hardships caused by cold, snow, rain, mud, sickness, hunger, and death challenged the faith of these hardy pioneers. But they were determined to follow their leaders and to do, no matter the cost, what they believed fervently to be the will of God. Their faith was challenged, and for some it faltered in especially difficult times. But it did not fail them. Many were sustained by the assurances they had received in temple ordinances performed in the Nauvoo Temple.

Pioneer mothers' selfless sacrifice

One of the more difficult hardships endured by many of the sisters was delivering their babies under harsh, extreme conditions along the trail. Eliza R. Snow wrote that as the pioneers "journeyed onward, mothers gave birth to offspring under almost every variety of

circumstances imaginable, except those to which they had been accustomed; some in tents, others in wagons—in rainstorms and in snowstorms." Sister Snow went on to record in her journal that she "heard of one birth which occurred under the rude shelter of a hut, the sides of which were formed of blankets fastened to poles stuck in the ground, with a bark roof through which the rain was dripping. Kind sisters stood holding dishes to catch the water . . . , thus protecting the [little one] and its mother from a showerbath [on its entrance to] the stage of human life."¹⁸

What a sacrifice these good sisters made! Some mothers lost their own lives in childbirth. Many babies did not survive. My wife's grandmother, Elizabeth Riter, was born at Winter Quarters in the back of a covered wagon during a rainstorm. Fortunately both the mother and the newborn infant survived. With great love for the woman who gave life to her, Elizabeth often lovingly recounted how an umbrella was held over her mother throughout the ordeal to shield her from the water leaking through the wagon's cover.

Let us never forget the faith of our fathers and the selfless sacrifice of our mothers, those pioneering Saints who set such an inspiring example of obedience. Let us remember them as we strive to be valiant servants in our work to "invite all to come unto Christ"¹⁹ and "be perfected in him."²⁰

Service repays debt of gratitude

Some 44 years ago my father spoke from this pulpit and explained how an appreciation of our heritage can strengthen and enliven our service in the kingdom. Referring to his own pioneer grandparents, he said:

"Because of the faith of these forefathers of mine, I am here, living in [these] peaceful valleys, in the shadows of great

mountains, and above all, within hearing of the voice of latter-day prophets.

"So, I owe to them . . . a debt of gratitude, . . . a debt that can best be paid in service to this great cause."²¹

Now as we see the kingdom expand throughout the world, an ever smaller percentage of Church members live in the valleys of Utah, in the shadows of our beautiful mountains. But today modern communication technology allows Saints throughout the world to be "within hearing of the voice of latter-day prophets."

As it was with my father, so it is for all of us. We who have been blessed to know the fullness of the restored gospel owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone before us, who have given so much to build the kingdom into the worldwide miracle that it is today. Our debt of gratitude to our forebears is a "debt that can best be paid in service to this great cause."

Serve courageously and faithfully

No matter who we are—no matter our talents, abilities, financial resources, education, or experience—we all can serve in the kingdom. He who calls us will qualify us for the work if we will serve with humility, prayer, diligence, and faith. Perhaps we feel inadequate. Maybe we doubt ourselves, thinking that what we have to offer the Lord personally is too slight to even be noticed. The Lord is well aware of our mortality. He knows our weaknesses. He understands the challenges of our everyday lives. He has great empathy for the temptations of earthly appetites and passions. The Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Hebrews that the Savior is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He "was in all points tempted like as we are."²²

President Thomas S. Monson taught the importance of being willing to serve in this great cause when he asked:

"Are we sufficiently in tune with the Spirit that when the Lord calls, we can hear, as did Samuel, and declare, 'Here am I'? Do we have the fortitude and the faith, whatever our callings, to serve with unflinching courage and unshakable resolve? When we do, the Lord can work His mighty miracles through us."²³

President James E. Faust has reassured us that whatever our abilities, faithful service not only is acceptable to the Lord, but also qualifies us for great blessings bestowed by Him, blessings that enrich and expand our lives. President Faust explained that "this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. . . . A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted [members] who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.'"²⁴

Be dedicated to the Lord's work

With the Lord to strengthen us, "we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things."²⁵ He encourages us to "be not weary in well-doing, for [we] are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."²⁶ May we be faithful in fulfilling the duties of whatever calling we have in the kingdom. Let us pay heed to the "small things" that make all the difference. Let us be faithful in keeping the commandments as we have made sacred covenants to do. As our heritage and our growth clearly show, we are indeed "laying the foundation of a great work."

Let us dedicate ourselves to doing the Lord's work to the best of our abilities. May we honor the faith of our fathers by giving our own faithful service

to this great cause. May we "follow the prophet"²⁷ and by so doing "come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God,"²⁸ I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 6:5.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1.
4. Hebrews 11:1.
5. 2 Nephi 32:3.
6. Matthew 11:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.
8. Isaiah 42:11.
9. Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Peter 1:19; cf. King James Version, 2 Peter 1:19.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1902, 2.
12. Quoted in *Deseret News*, 26 Feb. 1996, A2.
13. Alma 32:21.
14. 1 Nephi 4:6.
15. Quoted in *Church News*, 10 Feb. 1996, 3.
16. "Faith of Our Fathers," *Hymns*, no. 84.
17. Herbert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (1889), 217.
18. Quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:45.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
20. Moroni 10:32.
21. Joseph L. Wirthlin, *A Heritage of Faith*, comp. Richard Bitner Wirthlin (1964), 47.
22. Hebrews 4:15–16.
23. In Conference Report, Oct. 1992; 66–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 48; see 1 Samuel 3:4.
24. In Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 4–5; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 5–6.
25. Articles of Faith 1:13.

26. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

27. "Follow the Prophet," *Children's Songbook*, 110–11.

28. Jacob 1:7.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time. The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the splendid Ricks College combined choir. My, how we have been blessed by their beautiful music as we have listened to them this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "Our Father, by Whose Name," and following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Our Father, by Whose Name."

The benediction was offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 166th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 6, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Brigham Young University combined men's choir. Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I think that is tremendously significant in the light of the fact that today is the birthday of the Church. The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth.

We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and David E. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Loren C. Dunn, Ronald E. Poelman, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, and Augusto A. Lim are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Glenn L. Pace and John E. Fowler are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce that during this afternoon's session, H. David Burton, Richard

C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin were sustained as the Presiding Bishopric. Merrill J. Bateman, Dallas N. Archibald, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Bruce C. Hafen were called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and the following were called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: L. Edward Brown, Sheldon F. Child, Quinton L. Cook, William Rolfe Kerr, Dennis E. Simmons, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco J. Viñas, and Richard B. Wirthlin.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Brigham Young University combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," following which Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Joe J. Christensen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Lead, Kindly Light," following which Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder Robert D. Hales

The powerful example of Abinadi

The Savior said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). I would like to tell you a story, brethren—a true story about a man named Abinadi. Abinadi was a prophet who preached repentance to a wicked people and a wicked king. He preached boldly and courageously, knowing that he was putting his own life in jeopardy because of his words.

Wicked King Noah angrily ordered his priests to kill Abinadi. King Noah said, "Away with this fellow, and slay him; . . . for he is mad."

But when the priests tried to lay their hands on Abinadi, he withstood them, saying: "Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver. . . . I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me."

The people of King Noah were afraid to touch Abinadi because the Spirit of the Lord was with him. "His face shone with exceeding luster," and he spoke "with power and authority from God." Abinadi declared that he would finish the message that God had sent him to deliver—and then it wouldn't matter what King Noah and the people did to him. (See Mosiah 13:1–9.)

When Abinadi concluded his message, King Noah demanded that he deny the words he had spoken—or he would be put to death. But Abinadi refused.

The firmness of Abinadi's faith is found in this poignant entry in the sacred record: "And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because *he would not deny the commandments of God*, having sealed the truth of his words by his death." (See Mosiah 17:6–20; italics added.)

My brethren of the priesthood, what a powerful example Abinadi should be to all of us! He courageously obeyed the Lord's commandments—even though it cost him his life!

Follow the example of obedience

Prophets of all dispensations have willingly put their lives on the line and, with courage, have done the will and proclaimed the word of God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith went "like a lamb to the slaughter" (D&C 135:4), never wavering as he fulfilled the Lord's commandments.

And think of our Savior's example. He taught us how to live by the way He lived. Think of His tender compassion as He worked miracles and as He cared for the poor and the afflicted. He humbly chose to be obedient to His Father's commandments—and He endured to the end, fulfilling His divine mission and completing the atoning sacrifice for all mankind.

Brethren, as bearers of the priesthood of God, let us follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His prophets, past and present. It may not be required of us to give our lives as martyrs, as did many of the prophets. What is required is our obedience to the Lord's commandments and our faithfulness to the covenants we have made with Him.

To young Aaronic Priesthood holders

May I talk directly to you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood for a moment? The Aaronic Priesthood is the preparatory priesthood. It prepares you for the higher priesthood—the Melchizedek Priesthood. As bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, you must learn to obey the Lord's commandments. Honor your mother and father, keep the Sabbath day holy, do not take the Lord's name in vain,

honor womanhood, be chaste, do not lie or steal, live the Word of Wisdom, and pay an honest tithing and a generous fast offering. If you keep these commandments and others, you will be richly blessed.

Officiate worthily in the sacrament

You young deacons, teachers, and priests: Are you worthy to officiate in the preparation, passing, and blessing of the sacrament? These are sacred responsibilities. The bread and water are emblems of our Savior's flesh and blood; they represent His atoning sacrifice.

Think of that for a moment. The sacrament that you administer each week is in remembrance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The wondrous gift of the Atonement overcomes physical death unconditionally, and it is infinite because it is for all who have lived or will ever live in mortality. Through the Atonement, we are all redeemed from the Fall of Adam and will be resurrected.

However, for the full blessings of the Atonement to take effect in our lives and allow us to return to live with our Heavenly Father, we must repent of our sins and be faithful in obeying the commandments of God. Thus, the redemptive blessings of repentance and forgiveness are an important part of the Atonement, but they are conditional upon our faithfulness in obeying the commandments and the ordinances of God.

Oh, how the Lord blesses worthy bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood who bless and pass the sacrament to faithful members of the Church in His memory! And how He blesses those who partake of the sacrament worthily! If you are worthy to participate in the administration of the sacrament, you will be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood at the appropriate time and enter the temple to take upon yourselves covenants with the Lord.

Mission, education, and friends

Young men, prepare to serve as missionaries. Going on a mission teaches you to live the law of consecration. It may be the only time in your life when you can give to the Lord all your time, talents, and resources. In return, the Lord will bless you with His Spirit to be with you. He will be close to you and strengthen you.

Work hard to obtain an education and to learn technical skills that will allow you to be self-sufficient and support your family.

Cultivate good friends who do not try to make you choose between their ways and the Lord's ways. Be the kind of friend who makes it easier for others to obey the commandments when they are with you.

Obedience is a lifetime effort

Now, to you brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, as well as the Aaronic Priesthood holders: As you know, keeping the Lord's commandments is a lifetime effort! Let us be faithful and courageous in keeping His commandments, as we have covenanted to do.

The Savior declared: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Some may ask, Why did the Lord give us commandments? In premortal councils He determined that we, His spirit children, would be given commandments by which to live during our mortal lives. Jehovah, the firstborn spirit child of our Heavenly Father, said:

"We will go down, . . . and we will make an earth whereon these [God's other spirit children] may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon" (Abraham 3:24–26).

Commandments guide and protect us

These commandments are loving instructions provided by God our Father for our physical and spiritual well-being and happiness while in mortality. Commandments allow us to know the mind and will of God regarding our eternal progression. And they test our willingness to be obedient to His will.

The commandments are not a burden or a restriction. Every commandment of the Lord is given for our development, progress, and growth. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

"God has designed our happiness. . . . He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 256).

How I love the commandments of the Lord! They guide and protect us and allow us to return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. If we faithfully obey the commandments, we are promised the blessings of eternal life. Eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7), is to be exalted and to live with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in all the eternities to come. He dearly wants us to return to Him.

We don't need to wait, however, until the next life to receive many of the promised blessings. In this life the obedient may enjoy peace of mind, happiness, and "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

Obedience brings spiritual light

Living the commandments brings us into harmony with Deity; we become *one* in purpose with the Father and the Son.

When we are *one* with God, we walk with spiritual light. Our diligence in keeping the commandments allows the Holy Ghost to dwell within us. We are given the gift of personal revelation. This is a spiritual light that protects us and serves as a beacon, guiding us in righteous ways. It dispels the darkness of the adversary. So powerful is this light that it can reach us even when we are drawn into a black hole of sin so deep and so dark that we believe no spiritual light could ever penetrate.

Do you remember being afraid of the dark when you were a child? When you became frightened, you probably turned on the light or lit a candle—in fact, you lit every light in the house! When your parents came home later in the evening, they would ask, "Why is every light in the house on?" And then they would proceed to give you a lecture, I am sure, about the family budget and the cost of electricity.

You have learned, however, that by turning on an electric light or by lighting a candle, there was no more darkness, no more fear. You learned a simple law of nature, which is also a spiritual law: Light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Satan and his disciples cannot tolerate the spiritual light of the gospel; they must immediately depart. Satan cannot command you to do anything. With the priesthood you can command him to depart in your thoughts and in your actions.

When we live the commandments, our countenance is surrounded by gospel light. With this spiritual light we no longer wander in the strange and darkened paths of the adversary, becoming lost, discouraged, depressed, and fearful. Walking in the light of the gospel, we will not lose sight of our eternal goals.

Brethren, choosing to live the commandments frees us from the shackles of sin and allows us to experience true hap-

piness. There is no joy in sin. As the prophet Alma taught his son, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Fear God, not man

It takes courage to keep the commandments. To fail to do so because of peer pressure is to have the fear of man—to be more afraid of what man thinks about us than what God thinks about us. I have never understood why someone would have a greater concern about man's opinion than about God's opinion.

To know and keep the commandments, we must know and follow the Savior and the prophets of God. We were all blessed recently to receive an important message from modern prophets, entitled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). This proclamation warns us what will happen if we do not strengthen the family unit in our homes, our communities, and our nations. Every priesthood holder and citizen should study the proclamation carefully.

Prophets must often warn of the consequences of violating God's laws. They do not preach that which is popular with the world. President Ezra Taft Benson taught that "popularity is never a test of truth" ("Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1981], 29).

Why do prophets proclaim unpopular commandments and call society to repentance for rejecting, modifying, and even ignoring the commandments? The reason is very simple. Upon receiving revelation, prophets have no choice but to proclaim and reaffirm that which God has given them to tell the world. Prophets do this knowing full well the price they may have to pay. Some who choose not to live the commandments make every effort to defame the character of the prophets and demean their personal integrity and reputation. In response the prophets remain silent and merely turn

the other cheek. The world may see this as weakness, but it is one of the greatest strengths a man can have—to be faithful, unyielding, and unwavering to that which he knows to be true, accepting whatever consequences may follow.

God's commandments do not change

Each of us is free to accept or reject the commandments, but none of us is free to modify them to suit our personal preferences. Priesthood leaders do not have the right to change revealed principles and commandments just for the sake of being popular with the world. Nor do prophets have the authority to alter God's commandments in order to make them more palatable to those who are weak in their resolve to live worthily.

On one occasion a Church leader was confronted by a grieving parent who wanted one of God's commandments softened to accommodate a wayward child who had been disciplined by the Church. In his grief the parent had suggested that the Church leader was unchristian in denying the child the full benefits of membership in the Church.

The Church leader shared the sorrow of the parents and the child, but he remained loyal to the commandments of the Lord. In response to the accusation of not being a Christian, the leader said, "If I were to attempt to change the commandments, at that very moment I would no longer be following Christ's teachings."

Rationalization that God should change His commandments to accommodate our transgressions leads to spiritual darkness, which only the light of the gospel can remove. To the woman taken in adultery, Christ did not soften the commandment to not commit adultery. Rather, He counseled her to "sin no more" (John 8:11). He promises all of us forgiveness through repentance. It is we who must change, not the commandments.

Study, teach, testify, and obey

Dear brethren of the priesthood, we must never forget for a moment that the covenants we have made to keep—the promises we have made with the Lord and with our Heavenly Father—are the most important decisions we have made in our lives. Let us study and ponder the scriptures and listen to the counsel of living prophets. Let us teach and testify of the truthfulness of the commandments in our homes and elsewhere as directed by the Spirit. Let us reflect our love of the Lord by being obedient to the commandments and reaping the promised blessings both in this life and in the

life to come. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

I testify that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. May we remember who we are and act accordingly, that we may gain the riches of eternity for ourselves, our families, and our friends, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve has spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder W. Eugene Hansen

My beloved brethren, I feel the awesome responsibility of this evening as I respond to the assignment of the First Presidency to speak to the priesthood of the Church.

Here in the Tabernacle there is a perceptible spirit of warmth and love and brotherhood which is characteristic and typical of the priesthood of God. Also I sense that as you meet in dedicated buildings throughout the world, you too will feel that same spirit and brotherhood.

A great dispensation

This is a great time to be living in the world, “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10; see also D&C 27:13).

A humble boy’s prayer was the beginning of this dispensation as the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph and vested in him the divine commission to assist in ushering in this special period of time.

Ancient prophets, servants of God, have visited the earth for the purpose

of restoring precious priesthood keys—keys of authority and responsibility given them by the Lord at an earlier time (see D&C 27).

This is the restored Church of Christ. Our Savior, the Only Begotten Son of God, stands at the head of this Church. He established it nearly 2,000 years ago.

Rattlesnakes and wayward sheep

At the priesthood session of conference, I am always impressed with the number of young men of Aaronic Priesthood age who are here, many with their fathers, some with grandfathers, others with priesthood leaders. You young men bring with you the special, vibrant, enthusiastic spirit of the youth of our time. So I would like to direct my remarks to you for the next few minutes.

First, an experience that I had as a youth which helped teach me an important lesson. It occurred when I was quite young—to be more specific, a boy of 10 or 11. I was herding our flock of sheep in the mountains of northern Utah to the east of East Garland. My grandfather

had entrusted me with the sheep as we were moving them up the mountain to the summer range. I had just watered them in a small mountain stream and bedded them down for a short rest before going on.

While they were settled, I went about to explore the terrain and check the route ahead. I was a couple of hundred yards up the canyon when I heard a sound that chilled me to the bone. Once you have heard a rattlesnake, a very poisonous reptile, you'll never forget the sound.

Cautiously I moved toward that sound. To my surprise I observed not one but three rattlers just a few yards away. They were on a rocky knoll that had been warmed by the spring sun. While the sight of three rattlers in a bunch intrigued me, because you seldom see more than one at a time, it also concerned me since the sheep would need to pass this way.

Before long the sheep roused and started moving up the canyon. As they came closer, the snakes seemed to sense the intruders and slithered down the incline toward the creek.

Fearing the danger, I immediately turned my sheep up the hill away from the direction the snakes were moving. I was successful for a time, but then a couple of sheep broke away from the flock. As they did so, the entire flock seemed determined to follow those two errant old ewes, and there was no stopping them. You may have heard the characterization "They all followed like a bunch of sheep." Well, that's what happened here. To make matters worse, they were moving directly toward the location of the rattlers.

I had hoped that the natural instinct of the sheep would keep them at a safe distance. But some of the flock were pushed directly into the path of the snakes. And there was no escape for

the unfortunate ones that sustained the strikes of those disturbed reptiles.

It was a sad young shepherd who had to report to his grandfather a short time later the loss of two of his prized ewes. The experience of that day provided a very forceful illustration to me of what can happen when the sheep ignore their shepherd.

I was there as the shepherd. I perceived the danger and was trying my best to protect my sheep. But as a few started to go in the wrong direction, others were determined to follow. Though only two of the flock were lost, it was a loss that need not have been.

Heed spiritual shepherds

Unfortunately, in life we all too often see the results of those who ignore the attempts of spiritual shepherds to guide their paths past hazards and dangers that may be unperceived at the time.

Parents, bishops, grandparents, Scoutmasters, advisers, and genuine friends often can provide spiritual shepherding. Note that I refer to genuine friends in the category of spiritual shepherds. Notice also that I did not include peers in that group. I readily acknowledge that peers in some cases can be and are an influence for good.

Resist negative peer pressure

A genuine friend who has another's best interest at heart may often be the one who encourages or provides the strength in a weak moment to prevent that person from making a serious mistake. In so doing he or she helps prevent the sorrow and sadness, the embarrassment and loss of self-respect that nearly always accompany sin. But unfortunately, so many times there are situations where peer influence has a definite negative effect.

We read and hear of so many surveys and interviews where youth disclose that it was the influence and pressure of peers that led them to immoral and foolish behavior. Satan knows this. He is an expert at deceit. I suppose he should be; he's had plenty of practice. He is aware of the tremendous influence a group of peers can have on an individual.

There is a compelling desire to belong—to be one of the group. If he can get just one person to influence others to choose the wrong way for whatever reason, Satan wins. Often the easiest and simplest nudging is that “everyone is doing it” or “it’s the cool thing” or “how do you know it’s bad if you haven’t tried it?”

Don’t be deceived. Don’t be influenced with this kind of enticement. Keep your eyes above the crowd. Be your own person. You have been taught correct principles. Stick with those principles.

Do not try to justify “a little sin”

There is no neutral area between good and evil. If you are on the devil’s turf, get off it as fast as you can. As strong as Nephi was, I can’t forget his humble prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou . . . make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?” (2 Nephi 4:31).

Some foolishly try to justify conduct they know is wrong with, “It’s such a little sin; it won’t matter.” While it may be true that the particular conduct is not at the top of the scale, the more dangerous part is the road that it puts you on. “Little wrongs” just seem to have a way of leading into “bigger wrongs.”

The words of the American clergyman Harry Emerson Fosdick provide further instruction here: “The tragic evils of our life are so commonly unintentional. We did not start out for that poor, cheap goal. That aim was not in our minds at all. . . . Look to the road you are walking on! He who picks up one end of a stick picks up the other. He who

chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to” (*Living under Tension* [1941], 110–11).

Remain strong and faithful

Now, my young brethren, you know what is right. You have been taught well. You have the Holy Ghost. Your challenge is to remain strong and faithful. Keep your bodies and minds clean and pure. Make the decision early to get on the right road and then stay there. Your Heavenly Father loves you. He has confidence in you. He wants you to be happy. He has provided a pattern for you to follow (see D&C 52:14). That pattern is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest blessings of this dispensation is the presence of living prophets to provide direction and guidance. President Gordon B. Hinckley is our beloved prophet today. He loves you. Listen to his counsel:

“Prove your strength, show your independence, by saying no when enticement from peers comes your way. Your own strength will add strength to those who are weak. Your own example will give determination to others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 48).

“You can determine the kind of life you will have in your thirties or forties by what you do in your teens” (quoted in *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 66).

I pray you will make the decisions that will result in true happiness.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. This is His work. Of that I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

W. Eugene Hansen has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

Things to know before serving a mission

My beloved brethren, the responsibility of speaking to the priesthood of the Church is overwhelming. I feel honored to be numbered one of you. It is a great blessing to hold the priesthood of God. I earnestly seek your faith and prayers.

This evening I would like to speak to you wonderful young men about 10 things that I would like my son or my grandson to know before he leaves on his mission.

Your call comes from the Lord

First, you will be under call from the Lord Jesus Christ. What a marvelous thing it is to have the confidence of the Lord, your bishop, your stake president, all of the General Authorities, and President Hinckley to honor you with a call. You will be a servant of the living God and an ambassador of the Church.

Most of our missionaries are young and inexperienced in the ways of the world. Nevertheless, the Lord said, "He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all."¹

Despite our shortcomings and our inadequacies, we need to be reminded that the God who calls us to serve is the "possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son. But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin."²

Respect and obey your mission president

Second, your mission president is the Lord's representative. Do not criticize or demean him, privately or pub-

licly. If you will respect his authority, be obedient, humble, teachable, and follow the mission rules, you will be a successful missionary. For instance, one of the hardest rules to follow is to get up in the morning when your mission president directs. Many young men think the best time to sleep is in the morning. I'm grateful to my obedient senior companion, Elder William Grant Bangerter, who would set the alarm clock to get up early. When the alarm went off, it would jangle my nerves. In the winter it was dark, damp, and cold, and we never had any hot water for bathing or showering. He would cheerfully shower in that cold water; I would start to shiver as soon as he got out of the shower. I could not do anything but follow his example, but I have to confess that I was not quite as cheerful because my teeth were chattering.

Hard work is important

Third, hard work is more important than intellect. Remember the Lord's words in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit;

"And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me."³

President Ezra Taft Benson once said: "One of the greatest secrets of missionary work is *work*. If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people; and he will be happy. There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. That's the secret—work, work, work.

There is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work."⁴

One of the Brethren reported being in a missionary testimony meeting when a young elder, who was not given much to speaking, said, "I am enjoying my work. I guess that is all I can expect. I can't enjoy what I don't do!"

When President N. Eldon Tanner presided over the West European Mission some years ago, his slogan was "Have a good time." One day he said to a group of missionaries in Germany, "I would like you all to have a good time." After the meeting, one of the missionaries came up to him and said, "President Tanner, I don't think that it is quite fair for you to tell the missionaries to have a good time. You know, the only way they can have a good time is to do their work." President Tanner said, "Well, go have a good time."⁵

Forget yourself in the Lord's service

Fourth, forget yourself in His service. The Lord said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."⁶ If you will lose yourself in missionary service, you will find indescribable joy.

Nothing you do as a missionary should get in the way of your important message: not your dress, your hair length, or your attitude; not your deportment; and not your girlfriend at home. I do not wish to be insensitive to the natural affections between a fine young man and a lovely young woman. However, if a missionary receives a letter from his girlfriend stating that her affections for him have changed (we used to call that a "Dear John letter"; some of us have gotten those), I commend the good counsel given some years ago by Elder LeGrand Richards, who said, "There's a new group of girls every year! And the new group is just as good as the old group."

You young men are properly concerned about finding your place in this

unsettled world. However, when you are called as a full-time representative of the Lord, you should "serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day."⁷

Never permit contention

Fifth, never permit contention in your companionships. Some of your missionary companions will be your life's dearest friends. Be the kind of companion you would like to be with. Be unselfish in your relationship with your companions. When there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart, regardless of who is at fault.

Each of us is an individual with unique strengths and talents, different from any other person in the world. Each of us has weaknesses. In a harmonious companionship there is teamwork—where one is weak, the other is strong. As a boy I learned to drive a team of horses. If one horse was balky, the other could not pull the load alone. So it is in a missionary companionship. Each must pull his share of the load.

Keep clean, healthy, and neat

Sixth, keep your body clean and healthy and your living quarters clean. It is very important that you eat properly and get adequate sleep so that you can maintain good health. If you become ill, not only can you not do the work, but you will also become a burden on your companion. Remember also that keeping your person and your living quarters neat and clean is conducive to enjoying the Spirit.

As a representative of the Lord, your personal appearance is very important. You, the Church, and your message will be judged in part by your cleanliness and neatness. People will be reluctant to invite you into their homes if you are unkempt.

Love and serve the people

Seventh, learn to love and serve the people among whom you work. You should pray daily for them that the Lord will fill you with love as you serve them. If you do not love them, you will have difficulty teaching them.

A lonely young Persian student was in Munich, struggling to find meaning to life in postwar Europe. He heard a knock at the door one day, and two Mormon missionaries stood before him. He was not the least interested in religion. The only thing that interested him about these two young men was their accent. He had mastered four languages, but English was not one of them.

He invited them in, but as soon as they began their discussion he cautioned, "I don't want to hear about God, nor how your religion got started. I only want to know one thing: what do you people do for one another?"

He waited as the elders exchanged glances. Finally one of them said softly, "We love one another."

Nothing the missionary could have said would have been more electrifying than this simple utterance, for the Holy Ghost immediately bore witness that these missionaries were true servants of the Lord. Shortly thereafter, he was baptized into the Church.⁸

Study and teach from the scriptures

Eighth, study, ponder, and teach from the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. Know the truth so well that you can state it clearly. B. H. Roberts wrote, "To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better the opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true."⁹ You cannot convert people beyond your own conversion. The Book of Mormon, to-

gether with your testimony of it, are powerful instruments of conversion.

Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy acquaints us with a strong testimony of the converting power of the Book of Mormon: Sister Celia Cruz Ayala of the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission decided to give the Book of Mormon to a friend. She wrapped it in attractive paper and set out to deliver her present.

On the way she was attacked by a bandit who stole her purse and with it the wrapped copy of the Book of Mormon. A few days later she received this letter:

"Mrs. Cruz:

"Forgive me, forgive me. You will never know how sorry I am for attacking you. But because of it, my life has changed and will continue to change. That book [the Book of Mormon] has helped me in my life. The dream of that man of God has shaken me. . . . I am returning your five pesos for I can't spend them. I want you to know that you seemed to have a radiance about you. That light seemed to stop me [from harming you, so] I ran away instead.

"I want you to know that you will see me again, but when you do, you won't recognize me, for I will be your brother. . . . Here, where I live, I have to find the Lord and go to the church you belong to.

"The message you wrote in that book brought tears to my eyes. Since Wednesday night I have not been able to stop reading it. I have prayed and asked God to forgive me, [and] I ask you to forgive me. . . . I thought your wrapped gift was something I could sell. [Instead,] it has made me want to make my life over. Forgive me, forgive me, I beg you.

"Your absent friend."¹⁰

Such is the conversion power of the Book of Mormon.

Now I would counsel you young men as you enter your missionary service to forget the mysteries. Speaking of the mysteries reminds me of the man who

got up to talk and said, "I will now proceed to expound upon that which the Lord has not yet seen fit to reveal!" Mysteries include those matters that are speculative. They are things which have not been revealed or are beyond our understanding. It is the plain, simple truth confirmed by the Spirit that converts when accompanied by the testimony of a humble servant of the Lord.

Be prepared for Lucifer's opposition

Ninth, you must know that Lucifer will oppose you, and be prepared for his opposition. Do not be surprised. He wants you to fail. Discouragement is one of the devil's tools. Have courage and go forward. Recognize that the gospel has been preached with some pain and sorrow from the very beginning of time. Do not expect that your experience will be otherwise. President Wilford Woodruff recounted the difficulties of early missionary work:

"In my early missions, when preaching in the Southern States—Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky—I have waded swamps and rivers and have walked seventy miles or more without eating. In those days we counted it a blessing to go into a place where there was a Latter-day Saint. I went once 150 miles to see one; and when I got there he had apostatized, and tried to kill me. Then, after travelling seventy-two miles without food, I sat down to eat my meal with a Missouri mobocrat, and he damning and cursing me all the time. . . . In those days we might travel hundreds and hundreds of miles and you could not find a Latter-day Saint."¹¹

Your testimony is your strongest arrow

Tenth, your own personal testimony is the strongest arrow in your quiver. I have often related that in the early days of the missionary work in Brazil, where

we now have over half a million members of the Church, we did not have the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, or the Doctrine and Covenants translated into the Portuguese language. All we had were the Bible, a few tracts, our personal testimonies concerning the Restoration of the gospel and the Joseph Smith story, and our testimony of the living prophet. The harvest was not great. However, some of those who were baptized have for three generations remained faithful because they were touched by the powerful testimonies of humble missionaries almost 60 years ago.

Now, you cannot be responsible for whether or not those you teach will accept your testimony and join the Church. Do not feel that you must obtain a quota of baptisms to be successful. An old saying teaches that you can count the number of seeds in a single apple, but you can't count the number of apples in a single seed. The harvest is the Lord's. Your responsibility is to thrust in the sickle. The Doctrine and Covenants clearly records what is required of those who enter into the waters of baptism: "

"All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church."¹²

If you have the Holy Spirit resting upon you, and you speak by that Spirit the words of the Lord as contained in the holy scriptures and as outlined by His living prophets, God will ratify your message in the hearts of those who are hearing you.

Now, my dear young friends, missionary work is not easy. In fact, it is often quite difficult, but the Lord is the greatest paymaster in the world. Dedicated missionary service is one of life's most fulfilling experiences. This is in large measure because of the divine agency which flows so richly from the Lord to His humble and obedient servants to bless the lives of others. I know this because I have seen it manifested in the lives of thousands and have felt it in my own life.

May the priesthood of God be prepared and worthy for any calls that may come, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 50:26.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 50:27–28.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 35:13–14.
4. Mission presidents' seminar, Aug. 1982; quoted in *Missionary Guide* (1988), 32; italics added.
5. See N. Eldon Tanner, "Have a Good Time," in Rick Walton and Fern Oviatt, sel., *Stories for Mormons* (1983), 73.
6. Matthew 10:39.

7. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
8. Adapted from an untitled article by Russ Price, in Stan Miller and others, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1987), 5:186.
9. *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1909), 2:vii.
10. See F. Burton Howard, "My Life Has Changed," *Church News*, 6 Jan. 1996, 16.
11. In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:12.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

President Thomas S. Monson

We are all enlisted

What a vast audience is attending this general priesthood meeting this evening. The Apostle Peter aptly described you: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."¹

In the Sunday School of our youth, we often sang the hymn:

We are all enlisted till the conflict is o'er;

Happy are we! Happy are we!

Soldiers in the army, there's a bright crown in store;
We shall win and wear it by and by. . . .

Dangers may gather—why should we fear?

Jesus, our Leader, ever is near.
He will protect us, comfort, and cheer.
We're joyfully, joyfully marching to our home.²

Our duty in the battle for souls

Brethren, when we contemplate the wonderful world in which we live and then realize the tumultuous times which

beset us, joyful are we to know that Jesus, our leader, ever is near. We live in a world of waste. Too often our natural resources are squandered. We live in a world of want. Some enjoy the lap of luxury, yet others stare starvation in the face. Food, shelter, clothing, and love are not found by all. Unrelieved suffering, unnecessary illness, and premature death stalk too many. We live in a world of wars. Some are political in nature, while others are economic by definition. The greatest battle of all, however, is for the souls of mankind.

Our Captain, even the Lord Jesus Christ, declared:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"³

He called fishermen at Galilee to leave their nets and follow Him, declaring, "I will make you fishers of men."⁴ And so He did. He sent His beloved Apostles into all the world to proclaim His glorious gospel. And He issues a call to each of us to "come join the ranks."⁵ He provides our battle plan, with the admonition, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."⁶ I love and cherish the noble word *duty*.

President John Taylor cautioned us, "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."⁷

Another President, even George Albert Smith, said, "It is your duty first of

all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to [so] magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."⁸

Priesthood: the perfect plan of service

How does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.

We have accepted the call; we have been ordained; we bear the priesthood.

President Stephen L. Richards spoke often to holders of the priesthood and emphasized his philosophy pertaining to it. He declared, "The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.'" He continues: "This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.'"⁹

You may well ask, "Where does the path of duty lie?" Brethren, I believe with all my heart that two markers define the path: the *duty to prepare* and the *duty to serve*. Let us elaborate on these two markers.

Our duty to prepare

First is the *duty to prepare*. The Lord counseled us, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."¹⁰

Preparation for life's opportunities and responsibilities has never been more vital. We live in a changing society. Intense competition is a part of life. The role of husband, father, grandfather, provider, and protector is vastly different from what it was a generation ago. Preparation is not a matter of *perhaps* or *maybe*. It is a mandate. The old phrase "Ignorance is bliss" is forever gone. Preparation precedes performance.

All of us who hold the priesthood are now, or surely will be, teachers of truth. The Lord advised:

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand, . . .

"That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you."¹¹

Our duty to serve

Second is the *duty to serve*.

The First Presidency, composed of Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, in February 1914 declared, "Priesthood is not given for the honor or aggrandizement of man, but for the ministry of service among those for whom the bearers of that sacred commission are called to labor."¹²

Now some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.

"I never can learn Spanish!"

At times the Lord needs a little help to assist some as to the validity of this truth. I recall when I served as chairman of the Church Missionary Committee that I received a telephone call from a member of the presidency of the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah. He advised that a particular young man called to a Spanish-speaking mission was having difficulty applying himself to his language study and had declared,

"I never can learn Spanish!" The leader asked, "What do you recommend we do?"

I thought for a moment, then suggested, "Place him tomorrow as an observer in a class of missionaries struggling to learn Japanese, and then advise me of his reaction."

My caller responded within 24 hours with the report, "The missionary was only in the Japanese language class one-half day when he called me and excitedly said, 'Place me back in the Spanish class! I know I can learn *that* language.'" And he did.

Youth serve widows at Thanksgiving

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching and learning takes place other than in the chapel or the classroom.

Many of you hold the Aaronic Priesthood. You are preparing to become missionaries. Begin now to learn in your youth the joy of service in the cause of the Master. Could I share with you an example of such service.

Following Thanksgiving time a few years ago, I received a letter from a widow whom I had known in the stake where I served in the presidency. She had just returned from a dinner sponsored by her bishopric. Her words reflect the peace she felt and the gratitude which filled her heart:

"Dear President Monson,

"I am living in Bountiful now. I miss the people of our old stake, but let me tell you of a wonderful experience I have had. In early November, all the widows and older people received an invitation to come to a lovely dinner. We were told not to worry about transportation, since this would be provided by the older youth in the ward.

"At the appointed hour, a very nice young man rang the bell and took me and another sister to the stake center. He stopped the car, and two other young

men walked with us to the building. Inside, they escorted us to the tables, where seated on each side of us was either a young woman or a young man. We were served a lovely Thanksgiving dinner and afterward provided a choice program.

"Then the young men took us home. It was such a nice evening. Most of us shed a tear or two for the love and respect we were shown.

"President Monson, when you see young people treat others like these young people did, I feel the Church is in good hands."

There came to mind the words from the Epistle of James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."¹³

I add my own commendation: God bless the leaders, the young men, and the young women who so unselfishly brought such joy to the lonely and such peace to their souls. Through their own experience, they learned the meaning of service and felt the nearness of the Lord.

Home teaching—a divine service

In 1962, having returned home from presiding over the Canadian Mission of the Church, I received a telephone call from Elder Marion G. Romney. He advised me that the First Presidency had named me as a member of the Adult Correlation Committee of the Church, which committee had the specific assignment to work on the preparation of a new concept—even home teaching. Thus began a most interesting and rewarding experience for me. Each phase of our work, when completed, was reviewed by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. In the spring of 1963 our work was done and a number of us were called to serve on a new committee—the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee—and assigned to go among

the stakes of the Church, teaching and encouraging its implementation.

President David O. McKay met with all of the General Authorities of the Church and with the representatives of the committee. He counseled those assembled: "Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father's children. . . . It is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart."

In 1987 President Ezra Taft Benson counseled the brethren attending the general priesthood meeting: "Home teaching is not to be undertaken casually. A home teaching call is to be accepted as if extended to you personally by the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁴ He quoted the familiar passage from section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein the Lord declared to the priesthood:

"Watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church . . . ;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."¹⁵

"And visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties."¹⁶

A report card of home teaching

Recently our grandchildren received their report cards. They displayed them with satisfaction to their parents and to us. Tonight I would like all of the priesthood to mark their own grade on the report card of home teaching. Are you ready? *Yes* or *No* answers are sufficient.

1. Are you assigned as a home teacher?

2. Do home teachers visit your home at least once per month?

3. Do home teachers prepare and present a gospel message?

4. Do home teachers inquire concerning each member of the family—even those members who may be away at school or serving on missions?

5. What lesson did the home teachers bring to your home last month?

6. Did the home teachers join with your family in prayer during their visit?

7. Did you go home teaching last month?

The quiz could continue, but I sense the questions have been adequate to prompt a mental review and to motivate improved performance.

I am aware that we at headquarters authorized some modifications in the home teaching effort where priesthood numbers were very few—even to permitting a wife to accompany her husband when another companion from the priesthood was not available. But these exceptions were to be just that: *exceptions—not the rule*. We urge that an active bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood have assigned with him a teacher or a priest or a prospective elder, complying with the scripture, “And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also.”¹⁷ This is priesthood home teaching as it generally is meant to function.

Johann Denndorfer's home teachers

Should we feel the assignment too arduous or time-consuming, let me share with you the experience of a faithful home teacher and his companion in what was then East Germany.

Brother Johann Denndorfer had been converted to the Church in Germany, and following World War II he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land—the land of Hungary in the city of Debrecen. How he wanted to visit

the temple! How he desired to receive his spiritual blessings! Request after request to journey to the temple in Switzerland had been denied, and he almost despaired. Then his home teacher visited. Brother Walter Krause went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary. He had said to his home teaching companion, “Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?”

His companion said, “When will we leave?”

“Tomorrow,” replied Brother Krause.

“When will we come back?” asked the companion.

“Oh, in about a week—if we get back then!”

And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer. He had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved from the day he became a member of the Church and returned to Hungary. He presented the tithing to his home teachers and said: “Now I am current with the Lord. Now I feel worthy to shake the hands of servants of the Lord!”

Brother Krause asked him about his desire to attend the temple in Switzerland. Brother Denndorfer said: “It’s no use. I have tried and tried. The government has even confiscated my Church books, my greatest treasure.”

Brother Krause, a patriarch, provided Brother Denndorfer with a patriarchal blessing. At the conclusion of the blessing, he said to Brother Denndorfer, “Approach the government again about going to Switzerland.” And Brother Denndorfer submitted the request once again to the authorities. This time approval came, and with joy Brother Denndorfer went to the Swiss Temple and

stayed a month. He received his own endowment, his deceased wife was sealed to him, and he was able to accomplish the work for hundreds of his ancestors. He returned to his home renewed in body and in spirit.

And what about the home teachers who undertook this historic and inspired visit to their brother, Johann Denndorfer?

Knowing personally each member of this human drama, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that on the way from Debrecen, Hungary, to their home in East Germany, they sang aloud: "Dangers may gather—why should we fear? Jesus, our Leader, ever is near. He will protect us, comfort, and cheer. We're joyfully, joyfully marching to our home."¹⁸

Brethren of the priesthood, may all of us remember our duty to prepare and our duty to serve, that we may merit the Lord's approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."¹⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Peter 2:9.
2. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15–16.
4. Matthew 4:19.
5. *Hymns*, no. 250.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 20:23.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:78, 80.

12. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:304.

13. James 1:27.

14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 60; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 48.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:106.

18. *Hymns*, no. 250.

19. Matthew 25:21.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. Those wishing to attend should be in their places by 9:15.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. Having said that, I am afraid I am going to forget. If I show up in the middle of the morning session, you will know why.

We are very grateful to this wonderful choir, which has provided stirring music tonight. Thank you, brethren, very much.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "More Holiness Give Me," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Andrew W. Peterson of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A blessed people, a great brotherhood

We have had a wonderful meeting. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. I hope that each of us has gained much from what we have heard.

We are a blessed people. Where else in all the world can men and boys, each ordained to the holy priesthood, meet together as we do tonight. We are a vast congregation of hundreds of thousands—yes, of millions, bound together in a

great brotherhood. It is a tremendous and remarkable thing. I hope each of us treasures that which we have.

A week ago tonight this Tabernacle was filled with beautiful and bright young women. It was the annual Young Women conference of the Church, and I was asked to speak. A number of those in attendance and particularly the girls said, "We wish you would tell the boys the same thing. They need to know what you've told us." Well, I'm not going to tell you quite the same thing. If you wish to read it, it will be in the May issue of the *Ensign* magazine.

A dream of young Joseph F. Smith

I wish to begin this evening by reading a dream which President Joseph F. Smith had as a young man. As some of you know, President Joseph F. Smith was the sixth President of the Church. He served from 1901 to 1918, a period of 17 years.

He was the son of Hyrum Smith, who was the brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was born at Far West, Missouri, on November 13, 1838. When the Saints were driven out of Missouri, he was brought to Illinois as an infant. His father was killed in Carthage Jail at the time the Prophet Joseph was murdered. As a boy not yet 6 years of age, he heard a knock on the window of his mother's home in Nauvoo. It was a horseman to tell his mother that her husband had been killed at Carthage that afternoon. What a sobering and terrible experience that was for a little boy.

At the age of 9 this fatherless lad drove an ox team with his mother across the plains to this valley. At the age of 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He made his way to San Francisco and there worked in a shingle mill to earn enough money to get to the islands.

Hawaii was not a tourist center then. It was peopled largely by the native Hawaiians. They were, for the most part,

poor but generous with what they had. He learned to speak their language and to love them. He never lost his love for the Hawaiian people, nor did they for him. I give you this as background for the dream which he had when he was serving there as a very young man. I quote his words:

"I was very much oppressed, once, [when I was] on a mission. I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look a . . . man in the face.

"While in that condition I dreamed [one night] that I was on a journey, and I was impressed that I ought to hurry—hurry with all my might, for fear I might be too late. I rushed on my way as fast as I possibly could, and I was only conscious of having just a little bundle, a handkerchief with a small bundle wrapped in it. I did not realize just what it was, when I was hurrying as fast as I could; but finally I came to a wonderful mansion. . . . I thought I knew that was my destination. As I passed towards it, as fast as I could, I saw a notice, 'Bath.' I turned aside quickly and went into the bath and washed myself clean. I opened up this little bundle that I had, and there was a pair of white, clean garments, a thing I had not seen for a long time, because the people I was with did not think very much of making things exceedingly clean. But my garments were clean, and I put them on. Then I rushed to what appeared to be a great opening, or door. I knocked and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: 'Joseph, you are late.' Yet I took confidence and [replied]:

"Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!"

"He clasped my hand and drew me in, then closed the great door. I felt his

hand just as tangible as I ever felt the hand of man. I knew him, and when I entered I saw my father, and Brigham [Young] and Heber [C. Kimball], and Willard [Richards], and other good men that I had known, standing in a row. I looked as if it were across this valley, and it seemed to be filled with a vast multitude of people, but on the stage were all the people that I had known. My mother was there, and she sat with a child in her lap; and I could name over as many as I remember of their names, who sat there, who seemed to be among the chosen, among the exalted. . . .

"[When I had this dream,] I was alone on a mat, away up in the mountains of Hawaii—no one was with me. But in this vision I pressed my hand up against the Prophet, and I saw a smile cross his countenance. . . .

"When I awoke that morning I was a man, although only a boy. There was not anything in the world that I feared [after that]. I could meet any man or woman or child and look them in the face, feeling in my soul that I was a man every whit. That vision, that manifestation and witness that I enjoyed at that time has made me what I am, if I am anything that is good, or clean, or upright before the Lord, if there is anything good in me. That has helped me out in every trial and through every difficulty" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 542–43).

The core of that meaningful dream is found in the reproof given by Joseph Smith to young Joseph F. Said the Prophet, "Joseph, you are late."

Replied Joseph F., "Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!"

The result of that dream was that a boy was changed into a man. His declaration "I am clean" gave him self-assurance and courage in facing anyone or any situation. He received the strength that comes from a clear conscience fortified by the approbation of the Prophet Joseph.

Be ye clean

There is something in this for every man and boy assembled in this vast congregation tonight.

Are you beset with doubts and fears? Has discouragement pulled you down? Do you need added wisdom and strength to go forward with your life?

I call to mind the words of Tennyson's Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Sir Galahad").

Everything looks better when there is cleanliness. In Joseph F. Smith's dream, he could look into the eyes of the Prophet and say, "I am clean." Can you, my brethren, each of you tonight? We have a saying that used to be heard more commonly: "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

Spring-cleaning as a boy

When I was a boy living here in Salt Lake City, most homes were heated with coal stoves. Black smoke belched forth from almost every chimney. As winter came to a close, black soot and grime were everywhere, both inside and outside of the house.

There was a ritual through which we passed each year, not a very pleasant one, as we viewed it. It involved every member of the family. It was known as spring-cleaning. When the weather warmed after the long winter, a week or so was designated as cleanup time. It was usually when there was a holiday and included two Saturdays.

My mother ran the show. All of the curtains were taken down and laundered. Then they were carefully ironed. The windows were washed inside and out, and oh, what a job that was in that big two-story house.

Wallpaper was on all of the walls, and Father would bring home numerous cans of wallpaper cleaner. It was like bread dough, but it was a pretty pink in

color when the container was opened. It had an interesting smell, a pleasant, refreshing kind of smell. We all pitched in. We would knead some of the cleaning dough in our hands, climb a ladder, and begin on the high ceiling and then work down the walls. The dough was soon black from the dirt it lifted from the paper. It was a terrible task, very tiring, but the results were like magic. We would stand back and compare the dirty surface with the clean surface. It was amazing to us how much better the clean walls looked.

All of the carpets were taken up and dragged out to the backyard, where they were hung over the clothesline, one by one. Each of us boys would have what we called a carpet beater, a device made of light steel rods with a wooden handle. As we beat the carpet, the dust would fly, and we would have to keep going until there was no dust left. We detested that work. But when all of it was done and everything was back in place, the result was wonderful. The house was clean, our spirits renewed. The whole world looked better.

Spring-cleaning our lives

This is what some of us need to do with our lives. Isaiah said:

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well. . .

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18).

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord" (D&C 133:5). Thus has He spoken to us in modern revelation. Be clean in body. Be clean in mind. Be clean in language. Be clean in dress and manner.

Keep sacred, marvelous bodies clean

I speak particularly to the boys, but I hope the men will also listen and hear. We all constantly need reminding. Our bodies are sacred. They were created in the image of God. They are marvelous, the crowning creation of Deity. No camera has ever matched the wonder of the human eye. No pump was ever built that could run so long and carry such a heavy duty as the human heart. The ear and the brain constitute a miracle. The capacity to pick up sound waves and convert them into language is almost beyond imagination. Look at your finger and contemplate the wonder of it. Clever men have tried to match it but have never fully succeeded. These, with others of our parts and organs, represent the divine, omnipotent genius of God, who is our Eternal Father.

I cannot understand why anyone would knowingly wish to injure his body. And yet it happens around us every day as men and boys drink alcoholic beverages and use illegal drugs. What a scourge these are. For a little temporary lift, they take into their systems that which robs them of self-control, becomes habit-forming, is terribly expensive, enslaves, and yields no good.

I think of a young man who was recently convicted of automobile homicide because he killed an innocent victim while driving drunk. He was a young man of great potential. There is no telling what he might have become, but today he sits in prison, not only in the misery of his surroundings but also in the torture of his conscience. Our Father in Heaven, who loves us, has reminded us of the evils of these things and has warned us against them.

Stay away from alcohol, my brethren. Never get involved in a so-called beer bust. Do not get entrapped with illegal drugs. They could destroy you. They

could make of you a slave, and the cravings that would follow would impoverish you in getting money to buy more drugs to satisfy those cravings.

You hold the priesthood of God. You are someone special. You have had bestowed upon you a power sacred and divine. It is totally wrong for you to partake of alcohol or drugs that are forbidden by the law.

Be clean in mind

Be clean in mind, and then you will have greater control over your bodies. It was said of old, "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Unclean thoughts lead to unclean acts.

I remember going to President McKay years ago to plead the cause of a missionary who had become involved in serious sin. I said to President McKay, "He did it on an impulse." The President said to me, "His mind was dwelling on these things before he transgressed. The thought was father to the deed. There would not have been that impulse if he had previously controlled his thoughts."

Be morally clean

The finger of the Lord wrote on the tablets of stone, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). I believe that fornication is included within that term.

Of course you are tempted. It seems as if the whole world has become obsessed with sex. In a very beguiling and alluring way, it is thrown at you constantly. You are exposed to it on television, in magazines and books, in videos, even in music. Turn your back on it. Shun it. I know that is easy to say and difficult to do. But each time that you do so, it will be so much the easier the next time. What a wonderful thing it will be if someday you can stand before the Lord and say, "I am clean."

The Lord has given a commandment in our time that applies to each of us. He

has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." And with this He has given a promise: "Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45). I believe He is saying that if we are clean in mind and body, the time will come when we can stand confidently before the Lord just as Joseph F. Smith stood before the Prophet Joseph and said, "I am clean." There will be a feeling of confidence, and there will also be smiles of approval.

As a holder of the priesthood, you cannot, you must not be led into the vicious trap of immoral behavior. Of course you are to socialize with young women, to date, to have fun of a wholesome kind in a hundred ways. But there is a line which you must not cross. It is the line that separates personal cleanliness from sin. I need not get clinical in telling you where that line is. You know. You have been told again and again. You have a conscience within you. Stay on the Lord's side of the line.

Be clean in language

Be clean in language. There is so much of filthy, sleazy talk these days. I spoke to the young women about it. I speak to you also. It tells others that your vocabulary is so extremely limited that you cannot express yourself without reaching down into the gutter for words. Dirty talk is unbecoming any man who holds the priesthood, be he young or old.

Nor can you as a priesthood holder take the name of the Lord in vain. Said Jehovah to the children of Israel, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

That commandment, engraved by the finger of the Lord, is as binding upon us as it was upon those to whom it was originally given. The Lord has said in modern revelation, "Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and

must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit" (D&C 63:64).

A filthy mind expresses itself in filthy and profane language. A clean mind expresses itself in language that is positive and uplifting and in deeds that bring happiness into the heart.

Be clean in dress and manner

Be clean in dress and manner. I do not expect you to look like missionaries all of the time. But let me say that the clean and conservative dress and grooming of our missionaries has become as a badge of honor recognized wherever they go. The age in which we are living now has become an age of sloppy dress and sloppy manners. But I am not so concerned about what you wear as I am that it be clean. Remember Joseph F. Smith's dream. As he was hurrying toward the mansion, he had a little bundle wrapped in a handkerchief. When he bathed himself and opened it, he found that it contained clean clothing. Whenever you administer to or pass the sacrament, look your very best. Be sure of your personal cleanliness.

I urge you to be clean in manner, to be courteous, to be respectful, to be honest, to be young men and older men of integrity.

It is amazing what courtesy will accomplish. It is tragic what a lack of courtesy can bring. We see it every day as we move in the traffic of the cities in which we live. A moment spent in letting someone else get into the line does good for the one who is helped, and it also does good for the one who helps. Something happens inside of us when we are courteous and deferential toward others. It is all part of a refining process which, if persisted in, will change our very natures.

On the other hand, anger over a little traffic problem, with swearing and filthy gestures, demeans those who make them and offends those at whom they are

aimed. To practice the kind of self-discipline which can control one's temper in the little things that happen almost every day is an expression of emotional cleanliness.

Be honest

Honesty—what a precious jewel this is. Again this is a manifestation of cleanliness in thought and action. Insurance adjusters can tell you of false claims made by so many who dishonestly try to get compensation to which they are not entitled. Cheating is so common a phenomenon in school.

"Thou shalt not steal. . . . Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:15, 17). These mandates are likewise among the commandments written by the finger of the Lord on the tablets of stone. I am always pained when I read in a newspaper of some who are members of this Church who have been involved in a scam operation designed to take from others through dishonest means that which they covet for themselves.

Said the Lord, "Let all things be done in cleanliness before me" (D&C 42:41). I believe that includes a proscription against any kind of dishonesty.

Purify yourselves before the Lord

Brethren, have I belabored the point? I hope not. If so, it is only because I feel so strongly concerning the obligations placed upon us by the Lord. He expects His people to be clean from the sins of the world.

If any here have been guilty of any of these, let us repent forthwith. Confess to the Lord, and if the sin is egregious, confess to your bishop. He will help you. There can be repentance and there can be forgiveness. The Lord has stated, "Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice" (D&C 110:5).

In that revelation which is known as the "Olive Leaf," the Lord stated:

"And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean;

"That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise, which I have made unto you" (D&C 88:74-75).

In conclusion I return to where I started with the dream of a poor boy who was sleeping alone on a mountain and

saw a mansion toward which he hurried. Before entering, he stopped to cleanse himself and dress himself in clean garments. He was reproved for being late. He replied, "Yes, but I am clean!" The Prophet Joseph smiled, and Joseph F. Smith, that young missionary, eventually succeeded to the office of prophet and President himself. What a testimony. God bless us to walk with clean hands and pure hearts and be worthy of His smile of approbation, I humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Andrew W. Peterson offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 166th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jesop conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful Easter morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a magnificent spring morning here in the valley of the mountains.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, John K. Carmack, and Joseph C. Muren are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Robert E. Wells, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madsen are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission, wherever you may be. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Craig Jesop, with John Longhurst at the organ,

opened these services by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

The choir will now sing "Thy Holy Word," following which Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Thy Holy Word."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

The two great commandments

During the later Judean ministry of the Lord, "a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

"And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."¹

Times change, the years roll by, circumstances vary—but the Master's counsel to the lawyer applies to you and to me just as surely as though we heard His voice speaking directly to us this Easter morn.

How to fulfill the first commandment

How might we fulfill today the first part of the divine commandment to love the Lord our God?

The Lord declared: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"²; "Come, follow me"³; "I have set an example for you"⁴; "I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do."⁵ What, indeed, did He do?

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He brought to fulfillment the prophecies of the ages. Shepherds came with haste to adore Him. Wise men from the East came bearing for Him precious gifts; the meridian of time had dawned.

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the promised Messiah—even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The holy scriptures inform us that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”⁶ He was baptized by John.⁷ He “went about doing good.”⁸ At Nain He raised from death to life the widow’s son and presented him to her.⁹ At Bethesda He took compassion on the crippled man who had no hope to get to the pool of promise. He extended His hand; He lifted him up. He healed him from his infirmity.¹⁰

Then came the Garden of Gethsemane with its exceeding anguish. He wrought the great Atonement as He took upon Himself the sins of all. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Then came the cruel cross of Golgotha. In His final hours of mortality, He brought comfort to the malefactor, saying, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹¹ He remembered His mother in that eloquent sermon of love personified: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”¹² He died—the Great Redeemer died!

How to become like the Savior

Two questions, spoken at an earlier time, roll as thunder to the ears of each of us: “What think ye of Christ?”¹³ and “What shall [we] do . . . with Jesus?”¹⁴ I proffer these three suggestions:

1. *Learn of Him.* “Learn of me,” He pleaded, “for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹⁵

2. *Believe in Him.* The writer of the proverb urged: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”¹⁶ His is the only name under heaven whereby we might be saved.

3. *Follow Him.* He brought reality to the word *compassion*. He showed us the way. He marked the path we should follow. Selfless service characterized His life.

By learning of Him, by believing in Him, by following Him, there is the capacity to become like Him. The countenance can change, the heart can be softened, the step can be quickened, the outlook enhanced. Life becomes what it should become. Change is at times imperceptible, but it does take place.

The Savior’s love of neighbor

The Savior’s entire ministry exemplified love of neighbor, the second part of that lesson given to the inquiring lawyer—spoken of as the “royal law.”¹⁷

A blind man healed, the daughter of Jairus raised, and the lepers cleansed—all were neighbors of Jesus. Neighbor also was the woman at the well. He, the perfect man, standing before a confessed sinner, extended a hand. She was the traveler; He was the Good Samaritan. And so the caravan of His kindness continued.

Flight diverted for a mercy mission

What about our time and place? Do neighbors await our love, our kindness, our help?

A few years ago I read a Reuters news service account of an Alaska Airlines nonstop flight from Anchorage to Seattle, carrying 150 passengers, which was diverted to a remote town on a mercy mission to rescue a badly injured boy. Two-year-old Elton Williams III had severed an artery in his arm when he fell

on a piece of glass while playing near his home in Yakutat, 450 miles south of Anchorage. Medics at the scene asked the airline to evacuate the boy. As a result, the Anchorage-to-Seattle flight was diverted to Yakutat.

The medics said the boy was bleeding badly and probably would not live through the flight to Seattle, so the plane flew 200 miles to Juneau, the nearest city with a hospital. The flight then went on to Seattle, with the passengers arriving two hours late, most missing their connections. But none complained. In fact, they dug into their pocketbooks and took up a collection for the boy and his family.

Later, as the flight was about to land in Seattle, the passengers broke into a cheer when the pilot said he had received word by radio that Elton was going to be all right. Surely love of neighbor was in evidence.

Lost opportunities to love neighbors

A man was asked one day, "Who is your next-door neighbor?"

He said, "I don't know his name, but his children run across my lawn and his dog keeps me awake at night!"

Another man, in a different mood, wrote silently one night in his journal: "I thought the house across the street was empty until yesterday. Black crepe on the door made me aware that someone had been living there."

A poet set to verse the sorrow of opportunities forever lost:

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For Life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine.
We were younger then,

And now we are busy, tired men:
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.
"To-morrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But to-morrow comes—and to-morrow
goes,
And the distance between us grows
and grows.

Around the corner!—yet miles away . . .
"Here's a telegram, sir,"
"Jim died to-day."

And that's what we get, and deserve in
the end:
Around the corner, a vanished friend.¹⁸

A small boy and a telephone operator

Long years ago I was touched by a story which illustrated love of neighbor between a small boy named Paul and a telephone operator he had never met. These were the days many will remember with nostalgia but which a new generation will never experience.

Paul related the story:

"When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember that the shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the telephone, but I used to listen with fascination when Mother would talk to it. Then I discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name was 'Information, Please,' and there was nothing she did not know. 'Information, Please' could supply anybody's number and the correct time.

"I learned that if I stood on a stool, I could reach the telephone. I called 'Information, Please' for all sorts of things. I asked her for help with my geography, and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my arithmetic, too.

"Then there was the time that Petey, our pet canary, died. I called 'Information, Please' and told her the sad story.

She listened and then said the usual things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was unconsoled. 'Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers, feet up, on the bottom of the cage?' I asked.

"She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, 'Paul, always remember that there are other worlds in which to sing.' Somehow I felt better.

"All this took place in a small town near Seattle. Then we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. 'Information, Please' belonged to that old wooden box back home, and I somehow never thought of trying to call her. The memories of those childhood conversations never really left me; often in moments of doubt and perplexity I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding, and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

"Later, when I went west to college, my plane made a stop in Seattle," Paul continued. "I called 'Information, Please,' and when, miraculously, I heard that familiar voice, I said to her, 'I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?'"

"'I wonder,' she said, 'if you know how much your calls meant to me. I never had any children, and I used to look forward to your calls.' I told her how often I had thought of her over the years, and I asked if I could call her again when I came back west.

"'Please do,' she said. 'Just ask for Sally.'"

"Only three months later I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, 'Information,' and I asked for Sally. 'Are you a friend?' the woman asked.

"'Yes, a very old friend,' I replied.

"'Then I'm sorry to have to tell you. Sally has only been working part-time the last few years because she was ill.

She died five weeks ago.' But before I could hang up, she said, 'Wait a minute. Did you say your name was Paul?'"

"'Yes,' I responded.

"'Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down. Here it is—I'll read it. *Tell him I still say there are other worlds in which to sing. He'll know what I mean.*"

"I thanked her and hung up," said Paul. "I did know what Sally meant."

Sally, the telephone operator, and Paul, the boy—the man—were in reality good Samaritans to each other.

There are indeed other worlds in which to sing. Our Lord and Savior brought to each of us the reality of this truth. To the grieving Martha He comforted:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."¹⁹

"Follow thou me"

If we truly seek our Lord and Savior, we shall surely find Him. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me,"²⁰ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

On this Easter Sabbath we remember loved ones who have gone from our midst. Cherished memories of happy days, followed by lonely nights, long years, and pensive thoughts, turn our hearts to Him who promised: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”²¹ “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . ; that where I am, there ye may be also.”²²

The Savior of the world

He who taught us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength, and with all our minds, and our neighbors as ourselves, is a Teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel, even the risen Lord, who declared: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and the life of the world.”²³ “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.”²⁴

This Easter morning, as His witness, I testify to you that He lives and that through Him, we too shall live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 10:25–37.
2. John 14:21.
3. Luke 18:22.
4. 3 Nephi 18:16.

5. 3 Nephi 18:24.
6. Luke 2:52.
7. See Matthew 3:13–16.
8. Acts 10:38.
9. See Luke 7:11–15.
10. See John 5:2–9.
11. Luke 23:43.
12. John 19:26–27.
13. Matthew 22:42.
14. Matthew 27:22.
15. Matthew 11:29.
16. Proverbs 3:5–6.
17. James 2:8.
18. Charles Hanson Towne, “Around the Corner,” in Hazel Felleman, sel., *Poems That Live Forever* (1965), 128.
19. John 11:25–26.
20. John 21:22.
21. John 14:27.
22. John 14:2–3.
23. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.

The choir sang “He Died! the Great Redeemer Died.”

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “He Died! the Great Redeemer Died.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

The sacrament and a green footlocker

During 1995 we experienced many commemorations marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. For those of us who are veterans of this terrible conflict, these commemorations have been times of thoughtful reflection.

It is interesting what memories stay with us year after year, long after the historic event happened. For example, while I was watching a recent TV documentary on the war, suddenly into my mind came an old green footlocker. Let me explain why the green footlocker left such an indelible impression on me.

As I entered the mission field, I was blessed to be assigned to a very special senior companion. We had the privilege of laboring together for almost a year before a transfer occurred. With World War II raging, we knew at the end of our missions we would soon be called into military service. We both agreed that when we returned home we would try to enlist in the navy and hope that somehow our paths might cross as we served. Much to our surprise, on the first Sunday as marines we ran into each other at a Church service. Both of us had volunteered for the Marine Corps!

When we completed our boot camp, we were both assigned to the Second Marine Division and were blessed to have our companionship last nearly three more years. After the battle was over on the island to which our division was assigned, we were able to obtain a tent for our Church services. We made benches, a pulpit, and a sacrament table out of any piece of lumber we could find. Under the sacrament table we placed that special green footlocker. The footlocker was carried from island to island as the Second Marine Division completed its orders. The contents included a wooden plate, a wooden sacrament tray, a card containing the sacrament prayers, and several boxes of small paper cups.

When the battle was over and the island secured, many of the veterans in our division were rotated back home, including our Church leadership. My missionary companion was sustained as our group leader, and I was called to be his first assistant. The contents of the green footlocker represented all we held dear. As we gathered each week on the Lord's day, opened our footlocker, and used the contents to prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament, it was a spiritual and uplifting experience that renewed our faith and gave us hope for the days ahead. That special hour together each week

removed us from the trials and hardships of everyday life.

Even though the island had been secured, air raids continued. Soon our tent chapel was filled with many holes caused by shrapnel tearing through it. Because of the frequent tropical rains, it was uncomfortable to sit in a tent with so many holes in it. We determined that our meetings deserved better quarters, and through the efforts of the members of the Church from the marines, the army, the navy, and the air corps we were able to obtain enough material to construct our own chapel on the island. Now the green footlocker was placed beneath the table in a dedicated building where we could meet and worship together.

When our duties on the island were complete, we boarded a ship and moved on to another assignment. Our green footlocker remained in the chapel for others to use. I don't know its final destination, but I will always fondly remember that green footlocker.

Reminders of Jesus' supreme sacrifice

Our Father in Heaven understood the need for His children to be reminded of the promises He has made to us if we would obey His laws. In making such covenants, the Lord offered blessings in exchange for obedience to particular commandments. A plan was laid out for us from the very beginning. The central figure in His plan of salvation is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His atoning sacrifice for all mankind is the centerpiece of the history of our Father in Heaven's children here on earth.

Each of us who accepts the divine plan must accept the role of our Savior and covenant to keep His laws that our Father has developed for us. As we accept Christ in spirit and in deed, we may win our salvation. We read in the scriptures, "Wherefore, thou shalt do all that

thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8).

Is it any wonder that the Lord, from the very beginning, wanted to keep His plan firmly fixed in the minds of His children here on earth? Among the laws given to Adam and Eve, the law of sacrifice was instituted to remind them of the great event that would occur in the meridian of time:

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and [they] should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

"And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

"And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth" (Moses 5:5-7).

From that time onward until the Savior came to earth, whenever the priesthood was present, man offered sacrifices to remind him of the time when the Son of Man would come to earth to make the supreme sacrifice for all of us.

Christ instituted the sacrament

The blessing of the Atonement of our Lord and Savior is that each of us has the privilege of enjoying immortality and eternal life. Shortly before His Crucifixion, in the upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus ate the Last Supper with His chosen Twelve. The book of Matthew gives us an account of what occurred at this special last supper:

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29).

President Joseph F. Smith said this of the institution of the sacrament: "It was instituted by the Savior in the place of the law of sacrifice which was given to Adam, and which continued with his children down to the days of Christ, but which was fulfilled in his death, he being the great sacrifice for sin, of which the sacrifices enjoined in the law given to Adam were a similitude" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 202).

The Restoration and the sacrament

Shortly after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the priesthood from heavenly messengers in 1829, they were shown in revelation how they should proceed to organize the Church again on earth. Doctrine and Covenants 20 gives the reason for this specific date:

"The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to [all] the laws of [the] country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, . . . on the sixth day of the month which is called April" (D&C 20:1).

Peter Whitmer Sr. offered his home for the organization that was scheduled for Tuesday, April 6, 1830, in accordance with previously received revelations. At the appointed hour, somewhere around 60 people assembled to witness the formal organization of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The meeting was simple. Joseph Smith, then 24 years of age, called the group to order and designated five associates—Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer—to join him to meet New York's legal requirements for the incorporation of a religious society. After kneeling in solemn prayer, Joseph asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver as their teachers and spiritual advisers. Everyone raised their hands to the affirmative. Although they had previously received the Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph and Oliver ordained each other to the office of elder. They did this to signify that they were elders in the newly organized Church. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered next. The Restoration of the gospel clarified the use and meaning of the sacrament, which through dark periods of the Apostasy had suffered many perversions. By revelation the members of the Church were counseled, "It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus" (D&C 20:75).

Renew covenants worthily

With the partaking of the sacrament, we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and obligate ourselves to keep His commandments by covenant. This makes the partaking of the sacrament a renewal of the covenants we made at the time of baptism into the Church. Thus, by the sacrament we declare repeatedly, ordinarily weekly, our allegiance to the plan of salvation and its obligations and blessings.

As we come to our sacrament meeting, we should prepare ourselves to partake of the sacrament worthily. Paul counseled us:

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28–29).

President Brigham Young, speaking of the sacrament, said, "Its observance is as necessary to our salvation as any other of the ordinances and commandments that have been instituted in order that . . . people may be sanctified" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 171).

Our sacramental promises

As members of the Church we should delight in the privilege of partaking of the sacrament and thereby affirming our faith in our Lord and Savior and our allegiance to the Church of Jesus Christ. In addition, the Lord promises that if we will keep our covenants, we will always have His Spirit to be with us. President David O. McKay has reminded us in these words of our obligation to prepare to partake of the sacrament weekly:

"My brethren and sisters, do we always stop to think, on that sacred Sabbath day when we meet together to partake of the sacrament, that we witness, promise, obligate ourselves, in the presence of one another, and in the presence of God, that we will do certain things? Note them.

"The first: We are willing to take upon ourselves the name of the Son. In so doing we choose him as our leader and our ideal; and he is the one perfect character in all the world.

"The second: That we will always remember him. Not just on Sunday, but on Monday [and the other days of the week], in our daily acts, in our self-control. . . .

"The third: We promise to ' . . . keep his commandments which he has given . . . '—tithing, fast offerings, the Word of Wisdom, kindness, forgiveness, love. The obligation of a member of the Church of Jesus Christ is great, but it is as glorious

as it is great, because obedience to these principles gives life, eternal life. . . .

“Order, reverence, attention to divine promises—the promise to enter into the fold of Christ, to cherish virtues mentioned in the gospel of Christ, to keep them ever in mind, to love the Lord wholeheartedly, and to labor, even at the sacrifice of self, for the brotherhood of man—these and all kindred virtues are associated with the partaking of the sacrament. It is good to meet together and especially to renew our covenants with God in that holy sacrament” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 146–47).

Attend sacrament meeting faithfully

That old green footlocker will always have a special place in my heart because even in one of the most trying periods of my life, I was able to receive spiritual renewal for the days ahead as I would partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Over the many, many years as I have had the privilege of attending sacrament meetings, whether in times of peace or conflict, periods of joy or sorrow, periods of stress or relative ease, partaking of the sacrament has been a time of thoughtful reflection on the blessings the Lord has given to me and a time to covenant with Him to live closer to His law and His gospel.

I encourage each of you to be faithful in your attendance at sacrament meeting. The Lord has promised that if you will partake of the sacrament worthily, He will bless you with the peace of mind that can only come from knowing that you are participating in His divine plan. I also promise each of you that you will receive the special blessings He has promised you here on earth and in the eternities to come, according to your faithfulness. This is my witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “That Easter Morn.”

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang “That Easter Morn.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” We shall then hear from Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder Carlos E. Asay

We of the Seventy extend a warm welcome to the nine men who joined our ranks yesterday. We also extend to them hands of fellowship and the promise of support in the months and years ahead.

Stay on the true course

On this beautiful and sacred Easter morning, one’s thoughts center in Christ. And one’s inclination is to speak of His

Atonement and the “hope for a better world” (Ether 12:4). However, “the [full] merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” are not claimed by thoughts or words alone; they are the reward of those who are sure, steadfast, and always abounding in good works (2 Nephi 2:8).

I do, therefore, choose to speak with you concerning the imperative need to stay on the true course leading to eternal

life. Such steadiness of direction requires three continuing actions: (1) the reaffirmation of the desired goal, (2) an assessment of current position, and (3) the initiation of needed course corrections. These actions harmonize with the renewal of life associated with Christ's Resurrection and the fresh beginnings linked to this season of the year when the woes of wintertime are melted by the sunshine of spring.

These actions are also in harmony with the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Many of us receive an annual physical checkup and see our dentists twice a year. Some of us try to watch our diet, get the proper amount of rest, and exercise daily. All of this is done so that we might lengthen our days in mortality and enjoy a fullness of life.

I wonder, however, if we are paying sufficient attention to the spiritual aspects of our lives. Are we conducting frequent "spiritual checkups" to assess our standing before God and to determine whether we are on the path leading to eternal life? Alma asked: "Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble?" (Alma 5:27). These and other questions might be used to obtain readings of our spiritual temperature and pulse rate.

Reaffirm and focus on eternal goals

The ultimate goal of every clear-thinking person is to live after the manner of happiness in this world and, following death and resurrection, "dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41). "Happiness," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue,

uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255-56).

It must be remembered that "wickedness never was happiness" and never will be. Those who seek happiness in doing iniquity are seeking something "contrary to the nature of God" and "contrary to the nature of happiness" (Alma 41:10-11).

The need to remain focused on eternal goals is illustrated in the biblical account of Jesus walking on the sea and Peter's desire to do the same. Peter progressed over the water so long as he looked to Christ. But when he diverted his gaze away from the Master and allowed fear and doubt to enter in, he began to sink.

If we, like Peter, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our eternal destination, we too may "walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief, and unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt" (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [1994], 313; see also Matthew 14:24-31).

We must not allow the things of the world to blinker our vision of the eternal destination. Nor must we permit the "voices in the world" to lead us off course (1 Corinthians 14:10). Rather, we must allow the hope of Christ's glory and of eternal life to rest in our minds forever (see Moroni 9:25). We must reaffirm the goal that matters most and press toward it, "looking forward with an eye of faith" (Alma 32:40).

Assess current position

Once we have reaffirmed our goal and focused our eyes and hearts upon it, we must make an assessment of our current position. At a critical time in United States history, when a famed debate raged in Congress, Daniel Webster said:

"Mr. President, when the mariner has been tossed about for many days in

thick weather on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun to take his latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence and before we float on the waves of this debate refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are" (quoted in Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 78).

Mariners obtained their bearings by using a sextant. This instrument enabled men to measure the angular distance of the sun or the stars from the horizon in finding the position of a ship. Those who failed to look up and make needed course corrections often perished in deep waters, whereas the wise seaman who used the sextant in fixing position according to the light from celestial sources usually reached safe harbors.

The storms of life beat consistently against our "hulls." Therefore, from time to time we too must take our latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven us off the true course.

In 1916, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith declared: "The world is drifting. . . . Many things are tolerated today that would not have been tolerated for a moment twenty years ago. New problems have arisen with which we must now contend that we never dreamed of even in the days of my youth" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 71).

Eighty years later the slippage from traditional Christian moorings continues. Today we speak of the moral drift from gospel standards. We hear of some who belittle marriage, call divorce good, and promote relationships without natural affections. We observe some who are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Has any of this caused us to relax rules or compromise the commandments? If so, what is it doing to us, our children, and the people around us?

Said one insightful man, "If the temperature of the bath water rises one degree every fifteen minutes, how will the bather know when to scream?" (Marshall McLuhan). Failure on our part to fix position and take a firm stand in terms of rules, covenants, and expectations will result in a gradual float into dangerous waters and a conditioning to the rising heat of wickedness around us, and eventually all of us, especially our children, will get burned.

We need not and must not flounder on the sea of popular opinions or drift with the waves of immorality. God is among us, and He has provided us with precious sextants to assess our spiritual latitude.

One sextant was described by Elder Boyd K. Packer in these words: "Each of us has a sextant in our mind infinitely more refined and precise than that of any mariner. It functions on the principle of light from celestial sources as well. If we will set that sextant in our mind to the words *ordinance* and *covenant*, and then look up, light will come through. Then you will know how to fix your position and plot your course" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 3 Apr. 1987; italics added).

Alma spoke of another sextant. He suggested the need to focus our minds and hearts on the word of Christ and then look to God. By so doing we will not only find the right latitude but also set our course toward "a far better land of promise"—even eternal life. (See Alma 37:44–47.)

A third sextant provided us by a loving Father in Heaven comes in the form of living prophets. A prophet issues warnings, proclaims the truth, boldly calls people to repentance, and invites all to live more fully the gospel of Christ.

There is the warning, "They who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles,

shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14; italics added).

An assessment of one's current position, in relationship to the ultimate goal of eternal life, can and must be obtained by looking toward the light which comes from God through personal revelation, the scriptures, and the words of living prophets.

The Psalmist said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet" (Psalm 119:59). Of the prodigal son it is written, "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17). We too must think on our ways, come to ourselves, and turn our feet toward God, who is our goal.

Initiate course corrections

If the assessment of current position reveals the slightest deviation from the right course leading to eternal life or the slightest drift from the mainstream of our faith, we must make immediate course corrections.

One tormented soul cried out:

I wish that there were some wonderful place

Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches

And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,

And never be put on again.

[Louisa Fletcher, "The Land of Beginning Again," in Hazel Felleman, sel., *Best Loved Poems of the American People* (1936), 102]

There is a land of beginning again. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Course correction, along with a forgiveness of sins, is made possible to the repentant soul who comes unto Christ. But it requires faith, courage, and high resolve.

Stay on the true course

Mortality is not a pleasure cruise on some luxury liner. It is a voyage fraught

with challenges and constant buffetings of winds and waves. As James A. Michener wrote: "A ship, like a human being, moves best when it is slightly athwart the wind, when it has to keep its sails tight and attend its course. Ships, like men, do poorly when the wind is directly behind, pushing them sloppily on their way so that no care is required in steering or in the management of sails; the wind seems favorable, for it blows in the direction one is heading, but actually it is destructive because it induces a relaxation in tension and skill. What is needed is a wind slightly opposed to the ship, for then tension can be maintained, and juices can flow and ideas can germinate, for ships, like men, respond to challenge" (*Chesapeake* [1978], 445; see also D&C 123:16).

Whoever you are, wherever you live, and whatever you are doing, there will be challenges, for this is a time of testing. However, you must stay on the true course if you want to obtain happiness here and reach the safe harbor hereafter. There is no slight or insignificant deviation from the right way. One degree off latitude in the beginning becomes many degrees off course in the end.

If a "large ship is benefited . . . by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves," so are we benefited by keeping our hands on the wheels, resisting ill winds, and steering our course toward the desired port of eternal life (D&C 123:16). Such is done by reaffirming our goal, assessing our current position, and making needed course corrections.

"Be up and doing"

This is the season of renewal and fresh beginnings. It is a time when our tears for the crucified Christ are wiped away by the sure knowledge of the resurrected Savior of all mankind. It is a time when "we talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in

Christ," and remind ourselves that "it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*" (2 Nephi 25:23, 26; italics added).

Therefore, we must "be up and doing" (Alma 60:24) and make an honest appraisal of ourselves as members of family units, members of the Church, and professed Christians. The living Christ invites us to come unto Him and to become more like Him. Is this not the object and essence of the holy Atonement?

Let us worship Him in spirit and in truth and celebrate His triumph over sin

and death by looking to God and following the straight course to eternal happiness with even greater resolve and steadfastness.

For this I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Create and convey a legacy of testimony

Hearts were touched by the proclamation on the family read by President Hinckley last fall (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102) because we want for our families what God wants for them: that they will live in love and righteousness. But in our thoughtful moments we know that we will need help. We will need to invite the powers of heaven to guide our families in days when we are not there and to face spiritual dangers we may not foresee.

Our families can be given a gift to know what God would have them do and to learn it in a way that will encourage them to do it. God has provided such a guide. It is the Holy Ghost. We cannot give that to our family members as a companion, but they can earn it. The Holy Ghost can be their constant companion only after they have been faithful and after they have received the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands by those with proper authority. But even before baptism, a child or an adult can have the Holy Ghost testify to their hearts of sacred truth. They must

act on that testimony to retain it, but it will guide them toward goodness, and it can lead them to accept and keep the covenants which will in time bring them the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We would, if we could, leave our families a legacy of testimony that it might reach through the generations.

What we can do to create and transmit that legacy comes from an understanding of how testimony is instilled in our hearts. Since it is the Holy Ghost who testifies of sacred truth, we can do at least three things to make that experience more likely for our families. First, we can teach some sacred truth. Then we can testify that we know what we have taught is true. And then we must act so that those who hear our testimony see that our actions conform with what we said was true. The Holy Ghost will then confirm to them the truth of what we said and that we knew it to be true.

Testimony of John Bennion

That is how a legacy of testimony is created, preserved, and transmitted in a family. It isn't easy, but ordinary people

have done it. Like many of you, I had such ancestors. One was my great-grandfather John Bennion. We cannot duplicate what he did because the world has changed, but we can learn from it.

He was a convert to the Church from Wales. He, his wife, and his children came into the Salt Lake Valley in one of the early companies of pioneers. We know something of his life because after that time he kept a journal, making a short entry nearly every day. We have the journals from 1855 to 1877. They were published in one bound volume because his descendants hoped to transmit that legacy of testimony. My mother was one of them. Her last labor before she died was to transform the daybooks in which he'd written into a manuscript for publication.

His short entries don't have much preaching in them. He doesn't testify that he knew Brigham Young was a prophet. He just records having answered "yes" every time the prophet called him on a mission from "over Jordan" to the Muddy mission, then on to a mission back to Wales. He also answered "yes" to the call to ride into the canyons to track Johnston's army and the call to take his family south when the army invaded the valley. There is even a family legend that the reason he died so close to the day when Brigham Young was buried was to follow the prophet one more time.

The fact that he wrote every day makes clear to me that he knew his ordinary life was historic because it was part of the building of Zion in the latter days. The few entries which record his testimony seem to appear when death took a child. His testimony is to me more powerful because he offered it when his soul was tried.

Here is his record of one of those times. His daughter Elizabeth died in his arms. He reported her burial and the location of her grave in a few lines. But

then the next day, November 4, 1863, this is the entire entry:

"Wednesday. Repairing up the stable my little children prating around me but I miss my dear Lizzy. I pray the Lord to help me to indure faithfull to his cause to the end of my days, that I may be worthy to receive my children back into the family circle, who have fallen asleep in Christ in the days of their innocence: Ann, Moroni, Esther Ellen & Elizabeth, blessed & happy are they because of the atonement of Jesus Christ."

All the elements are there. He taught the truth. He testified that it was true. He lived consistent with his testimony and prayed that he might endure faithful until he could be united with his dear family. I feel his love and a desire to be included in that circle.

Gain our own testimonies first

We must find other ways to convey our legacy of testimony, but the process of teaching, testifying, and living the truth will be the same.

The scriptures, living prophets, and common sense tell us where to begin. We need to start with ourselves as parents. No program we follow or family tradition we create can transmit a legacy of testimony we do not have. We must start where Alma started so that our descendants can know that we testified from the same ground from which he testified. Here are his words as recorded in the Book of Mormon. It is what we must be able to say:

"And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed

many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:45-46).

As we gain that assurance, most settings we will be in with our families will be good ones to create a legacy of testimony. Some of the best are already familiar to us. Here are some ways to make those common settings more likely to invite the experiences which bring testimony to our families.

Hold weekly family home evening

First, plan for our weekly family night to be a setting for the bearing of testimony. Be sure that some truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught simply and plainly so that even a child could understand. A child could do the teaching. The child may choose to end with a testimony, if that is the way we end our teaching. A shy child may not easily bear testimony in larger settings but may in the safety of our homes. And the Holy Ghost will testify to those who hear and to the child who testifies.

Read scriptures as a family

Second, read the scriptures aloud together as a family. It may take unusual determination and inspiration to find a time and a setting. But reading and hearing the words of life from the scriptures will invite the Holy Ghost to confirm their truth. The Savior said it this way: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

From this pulpit years ago, President Marion G. Romney recounted reading the Book of Mormon aloud, alternating paragraphs with his young son, he on the bottom level of a double-decker bed and

his son on the upper. He thought his son was catching a cold but then learned that the tears came from his son feeling testimony that the book was true. And because they read together, both were blessed. (See Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 41.)

Pray as a family

Third, kneel together in humble prayer as a family, each having the opportunity to be voice. There may be times when the prayer seems rote and when those not praying let their minds wander. But there will be other priceless moments when someone will petition in faith for real needs and the Holy Ghost will touch hearts with testimony. I don't remember as much of my mother's teaching as I do her prayers for us. I could feel her love, and the Spirit confirmed in my heart that she loved Heavenly Father and the Savior and that her prayers would be answered. She brought blessings down on our heads then, and the memory of her prayers still does.

Fast and pay generous fast offerings

Fourth, fast and allow your children to fast once a month before the meeting in which they will partake of the Lord's Supper, hear others bear testimony, and perhaps themselves feel prompted to testify. The spiritual blessing will be even greater for them if they know that their choice to overcome their physical desires for food is making possible the caring for the poor. That can't happen unless we pay a generous fast offering with a joyful heart. It can if we do. And the likelihood will be greatly increased that they will feel the Spirit confirm that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ if we have first taught and testified that the Savior always organizes His disciples to care for the poor and the needy among them.

Receive home teachers; give blessings

We could extend the list of things to do to invite the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. For instance, the warmth and confidence with which we receive home teachers can allow our children to feel confirmation that they come as God's servants. The giving of priesthood blessings as children start a school year or leave home invites the Spirit at a time when hearts are humble and thus receptive to the whisperings of the Spirit.

Respond to tragedy with faith

Some of the greatest opportunities to create and transmit a legacy of testimony cannot be planned. Tragedy, loss, and hurt often arrive unanticipated. How we react when we are surprised will tell our families whether what we have taught and testified lies deep in our hearts. Most of us will have taught our children of the power of the Savior to carry us through whatever befalls us. These words are from the Book of Mormon:

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).

When tragedy strikes or even when it looms, our families will have the opportunity to look into our hearts to see whether we know what we said we knew. Our children will watch, feel the Spirit confirm that we lived as we preached, remember that confirmation, and pass the story across the generations.

Grandmother Eyring's faith in adversity

I have one such story in my legacy. Grandmother Eyring learned from a doctor in his office that she would die of stomach cancer. My father, her oldest

son, had driven her there and was waiting for her. He told me that on the way home she said, "Now, Henry, let's be cheerful. Let's sing hymns." They sang "O My Father" (*Hymns*, no. 292) and "Come, Come, Ye Saints," where the last verse begins, "And should we die before our journey's through" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

I wasn't there, but I imagine they sang loudly—they didn't have very melodic voices—with faith and no tears. She spent part of her last months in the home of her oldest child, her daughter. Aunt Camilla told me that Grandma complained only once, and then it was not really a complaint but just to say that it hurt.

Now, there are many people who have been cheerful and brave in the face of death. But it means far more to her family when the person has taught and testified of the power of the Savior to succor, of the sureness of the Resurrection, and of the hope of eternal life. The Spirit confirmed to me that Grandma's peace and her courage were signs that her testimony was true, and because of that, all was well, all was well.

Hope for those who reject testimony

Sadly, each of us knows that even teaching, testifying, and living true to that testimony may not pass on the legacy. Great and good parents have done that and then seen their families or some in their families reject that testimony. There is reason for us to have great hope and optimism. It comes first from our testimony of the nature of our Heavenly Father: He loves our family members; He is their Heavenly Father as well as ours. It also comes from our testimony of the mission of Jesus Christ: He paid the price to redeem them. And it comes from our testimony of the restoration of priesthood keys. Because of that, the power is on the earth again to make covenants with God which seal families together—covenants which God honors.

That is why we must not despair. As we offer the legacy of testimony to our families, some may not receive it. It may even seem to skip over generations. But God will reach out to offer the legacy again and again. More than we can imagine, our faithful effort to offer to our family the testimony we have of the truth will be multiplied in power and extended in time.

We have all seen evidence of that in families we have known. I saw it in South America as I looked into the faces of missionaries. Hundreds of them passed by me, shaking my hand and looking deeply into my eyes. I was nearly overwhelmed with the confirmation that these children of Father Lehi and of Sariah were there in the Lord's service because our Heavenly Father honors His promises to families. To nearly his last breath, Lehi taught and testified and tried to bless his children. Terrible tragedy came among his descendants when they rejected his testimony, the testimonies of other prophets, and of the scriptures. But in the eyes and faces of those missionaries I felt confirmation that God has kept His promises to reach out to Lehi's covenant children and that He will reach out to ours.

I testify that I know that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and that He loves us and that He knows us. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that we will be resurrected and can be sanctified because of His sacrifice. I testify that we can know the truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. I know that we can live together in families in eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God. I pray that we may, with all our hearts for all our lives, offer testimony of the truth to our families. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, has just addressed us.

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy.

A one-half hour video production, *The Lamb of God*, will be broadcast following this session for those across the nation. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Announcement of a new meeting hall

Now, my brothers and sisters, if I may say a few words. First I'd like to say that it's wonderful to see all of you gathered in the Tabernacle this Easter morning. You're a wonderful sight. It is a remarkable thing to contemplate the many more who are assembled in more than 3,000 halls in various parts of the world.

I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many

out on the grounds. This unique and remarkable hall, built by our pioneer forebears and dedicated to the worship of the Lord, comfortably seats about 6,000. Some of you seated on those hard benches for two hours may question the word *comfortably*.

My heart reaches out to those who wish to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated

house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building.

We recognize, of course, that we can never build a hall large enough to accommodate all the membership of this growing Church. We've been richly blessed with other means of communication, and the availability of satellite transmission makes it possible to carry the proceedings of the conference to hundreds of thousands throughout the world.

But there are still those in large numbers who wish to be seated where they can see in person those who are speaking and participating in other ways. The structure we envision will not be a sports arena. It will be a great hall with fixed seating and excellent acoustics. It will be a dedicated house of worship, and that will be its primary purpose. It will be fashioned in such a way that only a portion or the entire hall may be used, according to need. It will accommodate not only religious services but will serve other Church purposes, such as the presentation of sacred pageants and things of that kind. It will also accommodate some community cultural events that will be in harmony with its purpose.

The architectural and engineering studies have not gone far enough for us to make a detailed announcement, but the results thus far are encouraging, and we're hopeful that they will materialize.

Gratitude for sustaining and for leaders

Now for a moment I wish to speak of a personal matter. It was a year ago at this conference when in a solemn assembly you raised your hands to sustain me in this great and sacred calling. My heart swells with gratitude for your expressions of confidence. I am humbled, I am overwhelmed by your words of kindness, loyalty, and love. I think I understand, in a measure at least, the magnitude of this responsibility. I have no desire other than

to do that which the Lord would have done. I am His servant, called to serve His people. This is His Church. We are only custodians of that which belongs to Him.

I am deeply grateful for the two good and able men who stand at my side as counselors and who have been so loyal and helpful. I am grateful for my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Nowhere else will you find a more dedicated and able body of men who love the Lord and seek to do His will. I am likewise grateful for the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. I am grateful for the Area Authorities, for stake presidents and bishops and those who preside over quorums, for faithful mission presidents and temple presidents. I am thankful for the auxiliary organizations and for the strength and capacity and dedication of those who preside over the Relief Society, the Young Women, the Sunday School, and the Primary organizations.

Gratitude for faithful members

I am thankful for every member of this Church who walks in faith and faithfulness. We are all in this together as Latter-day Saints bound by a common love for our Master, who is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. We are a covenant people who have taken upon ourselves His holy name.

The Church is the stronger or the weaker as each member is strong or weak in his or her faith and performance.

During this past year I have traveled extensively. I am determined that while I have strength, I will get out among the people at home and abroad to express my appreciation, to give encouragement, to build faith, to teach, to add my testimony to theirs and at the same time to draw strength from them. I thank all of those who are assisting in this.

I intend to keep moving with energy for as long as I can. I wish to mingle with

the people I love. Recently I have met with many of our youth, thousands of them. These have been wonderfully reassuring experiences. It is an inspiration to look into the eyes of young men and women who love the Lord, who want to do the right thing, who want to build lives that are productive and fruitful of great good. They are working hard to develop skills that will bless them and the society of which they will become a part. They are serving missions for the Church in unprecedented numbers. They are clean, bright, able, and happy. Surely the Lord must love those of this choice generation of youth who learn and serve in His Church. I love them, and I want them to know that. Life is not easy for them. I think that never before has evil been presented in so attractive and beguiling a manner by those who with sinister designs seek to grow wealthy on the tragedies of lives that become blighted and marred as they partake of these evil goods.

I salute fathers and mothers who are loyal to one another and who nurture their children in faith and love. There has been a wonderful response to the proclamation on the family, which we issued last October (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). We hope you will read it and reread it.

This work is growing across the world in a remarkable and wonderful way. The Lord is opening the doors of the nations. He is touching the hearts of the people. The equivalent of 100 new stakes of Zion are coming into the Church each year. This brings with it significant challenges. As has been widely noted, we have passed the line where we now have more members of the Church outside the United States than we have in the United States.

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for the goodness of your lives. I thank you for your efforts in trying to measure up to the very high standards of this, the Lord's Church. Thank you for your faith.

Thank you for your sustaining hands and hearts. Thank you for your prayers.

As everyone here knows, there is only one reason for any of us serving. And that is to assist our Father in Heaven in His declared work and glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters (see Moses 1:39).

The Savior's victory over death

There is one grand key in this vast divine program, and that is the redemption of mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that of which I now wish to speak briefly.

This is Easter morning. This is the Lord's day, when we celebrate the greatest victory of all time, the victory over death.

Those who hated Jesus thought they had put an end to Him forever when the cruel spikes pierced His quivering flesh and the cross was raised on Calvary. But this was the Son of God, with whose power they did not reckon. Through His death came the Resurrection and the assurance of eternal life. None of us can fully understand the pain He bore as He prayed in Gethsemane and subsequently hung in ignominy between two thieves while those who looked at Him taunted Him and said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31).

With sorrow unspeakable, those who loved Him placed His wounded, lifeless body in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Gone was hope from the lives of His Apostles, whom He had loved and taught. He to whom they had looked as Lord and Master had been crucified and His body laid in a sealed tomb. He had taught them of His eventual death and resurrection, but they had not understood. Now they were forlorn and dejected. They must have wept and wondered as the great stone was rolled to seal the burial place.

The Jewish Sabbath passed. Then came a new day, a day that ever after

was to be the Lord's day. In their sorrow, Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the tomb. The stone was no longer in place. Curiously they looked inside. To their astonishment the tomb was empty.

Distraught and fearful, Mary ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. She cried, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20:2).

They came running, and their fears were confirmed. Disconsolate, they looked and then "went away again unto their own home" (John 20:10).

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

"And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:11-17).

She who had loved Him so much, she who had been healed by Him was the first to whom He appeared. There fol-

lowed others, even, as Paul declares, up to 500 brethren at one time (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

Now the Apostles understood what He had tried to teach them. Thomas, on feeling of His wounds, declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Testimonies of the risen Lord

Can anyone doubt the veracity of that account? No event of history has been more certainly confirmed. There is the testimony of all who saw and felt and spoke with the risen Lord. He appeared on two continents in two hemispheres and taught the people before His final ascension. Two sacred volumes, two testaments speak of this most glorious of all events in all of human history. But these are only accounts, the faithless critic says. To which we reply that beyond these is the witness and the testimony, borne by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the truth and validity of this most remarkable event. Through the centuries, untold numbers have paid with the sacrifice of their comforts, their fortunes, their very lives for the convictions they carried in their hearts of the reality of the risen, living Lord.

And then comes the ringing testimony of the Prophet of this dispensation that in a wondrous theophany he saw and was spoken to by the Almighty Father and the Risen Son. That vision, glorious beyond description, became the wellspring of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with all the keys, authority, and power found therein, and the sustaining comfort to be found in the testimony of its people.

The assurance of immortality

There is nothing more universal than death, and nothing brighter with hope and faith than the assurance of immortality. The abject sorrow that comes with death, the bereavement that follows the

passing of a loved one are mitigated only by the certainty of the resurrection of the Son of God that first Easter morning.

What meaning would life have without the reality of immortality? Otherwise life would become only a dismal journey of "getting and spending," only to end in utter and hopeless oblivion.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

The pain of death is swallowed up in the peace of eternal life. Of all the events in the chronicles of humanity, none is of such consequence as this.

Contemplating the wonder of the Atonement wrought in behalf of all mankind, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared in words descriptive and beautiful:

"Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!" (D&C 128:23).

The Savior shines through all darkness

Whenever the cold hand of death strikes, there shines through the gloom and the darkness of that hour the triumphant figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, He, the Son of God, who by His matchless and eternal power overcame death. He is the Redeemer of the world. He gave His life for each of us. He took it up again and became the firstfruits of them that slept. He, as King of Kings, stands

triumphant above all other kings. He, as the Omnipotent One, stands above all rulers. He is our comfort, our only true comfort, when the dark shroud of earthly night closes about us as the spirit departs the human form.

Towering above all mankind stands Jesus the Christ, the King of glory, the unblemished Messiah, the Lord Emmanuel. In the hour of deepest sorrow we draw hope and peace and certitude from the words of the angel that Easter morning, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:6). We draw strength from the words of Paul, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ . . . all [are] made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus
offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully
he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he
was crucified,
That for me, a sinner, he suffered,
he bled and died.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should
care for me
Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!
["I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no.
193]

He is our King, our Lord, our Master, the living Christ, who stands on the right hand of His Father. He lives! He lives, resplendent and wonderful, the living Son of the living God. Of this we bear solemn testimony this day of rejoicing, this Easter morning, when we commemorate the miracle of the empty tomb, in the name of Him who rose from the dead, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 166th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1996. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Dallas N. Archibald, and F. David Stanley are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Harold G. Hillam, Vaughn J. Featherstone, L. Lionel Kendrick, and Lino Alvarez are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop and accompanied by Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "He Is Risen!" The invocation will be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

The choir sang "He Is Risen!"

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

I add my warm welcome to the newly sustained Seventies, promising them friendship as we now company one another through the years which lie ahead.

Today's Sinai of secularism

First, brothers and sisters, some brief samples illustrating the challenge of making our way through today's Sinai of secularism, and then a focus on how inspired children help in that trek.

All about us we see the bitter and abundant harvest from permissiveness. A perceptive person has acknowledged:

"The struggle to live ethically without God has left us not with the just and moral order we imagined but with disorder and confusion.

"Something has gone radically wrong with secularism. The problem has more than its share of irony, for secularism, in the end, has converted itself into a kind of religion. . . .

"... Now the transition is complete: the state has become the church" (Peter Marin, "Secularism's Blind Faith," *Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 1995, 20).

The more what is politically correct seeks to replace what God has declared correct, the more ineffective approaches to human problems there will be, all reminding us of C. S. Lewis's metaphor about those who run around with fire extinguishers in times of flood. For instance, there are increasing numbers of victims of violence and crime, yet special attention is paid to the rights of criminals. Accompanying an ever increasing addiction to pornography are loud alarms against censorship. Rising illegitimacy destroys families and threatens the funding capacities of governments; nevertheless, chastity and fidelity are mocked. These and other consequences produce a harsh cacophony. When Nero fiddled as Rome burned, at least he made a little music! I have no hesitancy, brothers and sisters, in stating that unless checked, permissiveness, by the end of its journey, will cause humanity to stare in mute disbelief at its awful consequences.

Ironically, as some people become harder, they use softer words to describe dark deeds. This too is part of being sedated by secularism! Needless abortion, for instance, is a "reproductive health procedure," which is an even more "spongy expression" than "termination of pregnancy" (George McKenna, "On Abortion: A Lincolnian Position," *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1995, 52, 54). *Illegitimacy* gives way to the wholly sanitized words *nonmarital birth* or *alternative parenting* (see Ben J. Wattenberg, *Values Matter Most* [1995], 173).

Tares masquerading as wheat

Church members will live in this wheat-and-tares situation until the Millennium. Some real tares even masquerade as wheat, including the few eager individuals who lecture the rest of us

about Church doctrines in which they no longer believe. They criticize the use of Church resources to which they no longer contribute. They condescendingly seek to counsel the Brethren whom they no longer sustain. Confrontive, except of themselves, of course, they leave the Church, but they cannot leave the Church alone (see Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 17; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 14). Like the throng on the rampsarts of the "great and spacious building," they are intensely and busily preoccupied, pointing fingers of scorn at the steadfast iron-rodgers (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28, 33). Considering their ceaseless preoccupation, one wonders, Is there no diversionary activity available to them, especially in such a large building—like a bowling alley? Perhaps in their mockings and beneath the stir are repressed doubts of their doubts. In any case, given the perils of popularity, Brigham Young advised that this "people must be kept where the finger of scorn can be pointed at them" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 434).

Therefore, brothers and sisters, quiet goodness must persevere even when, as prophesied, a few actually rage in their anger against that which is good (see 2 Nephi 28:20). Likewise the arrogance of critics must be met by the meekness and articulateness of believers. If sometimes ringed by resentment, we must still reach out, especially for those whose hands hang down (see D&C 81:5). If our shortcomings as a people are occasionally highlighted, then let us strive to do better.

Oases of the Restoration

Besides, the exhilarations of discipleship exceed its burdens. Hence, while journeying through our Sinai, we are nourished in the Bountiful-like oases of the Restoration. Of these oases some of our first impressions may prove to be more childish than definitive. When we

brush against such lush and verdant vegetation, its fragrance is inevitably upon us. Our pockets are stuffed with varied and lush fruits, and we are filled with glee. There is no way to describe it all. In our appreciation, little wonder some of us mistake a particular tree for the whole of an oasis, or a particularly refreshing pool for the entirety of the Restoration's gushing and living waters. Hence, in our early exclamations there may even be some unintended exaggerations. We have seen and partaken of far too much; hence, we "cannot [speak] the smallest part which [we] feel" (Alma 26:16).

Strength of family and friends

In addition to these oases, the Lord has made further and "ample provision" for our journey, including families, neighbors, and fellow servants (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 220). Each of these is given to strengthen, edify, instruct, comfort, and inspire us while we are "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2). Therefore, we experience the contagiousness of commitment in these interlacings of our lives.

Some 12 years ago there was a tennis match with two LDS physicians and a nonmember medical student from Brazil. With no intervening communication, last month in Curitiba, Brazil, Valentim Gonçalves stood by me again, not on a tennis court but instead in a regional conference to translate for me. Thanks to his innate goodness and the good work of others, ophthalmologist Valentim is not only a member but is a stake president in Curitiba. Valentim and his special wife, sealed in the temple, have been blessed with three lovely children. This remarkable rendezvous added to my already appreciative wonder over the workings of the hand of the Lord (see D&C 59:21).

Children often show the way

Inspired children often show the way through the wilderness. One reason they are able to do so is implicit in the searching question asked by King Benjamin: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Children often have the "thoughts and [the] intents of [their] heart[s]" focused on the Master. Though not full of years, such children are full of faith! Too young for formal Church callings, they have been "called to serve" as exemplifiers, doing especially well when blessed with "goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Just as the scriptures assure, "little children do have words given unto them many times" (Alma 32:23). For example, the resurrected Jesus revealed things to the Nephite children, who then taught adults and their parents "even greater" things than Jesus had taught (3 Nephi 26:14).

Three-year-old Nate Barker

It has been a privilege to seal several adopted children to Nan and Dan Barker, now of Arizona. Some time ago Nate, then just over three, said, "Mommy, there is another little girl who is supposed to come to our family. She has dark hair and dark eyes and lives a long way from here."

The wise mother asked, "How do you know this?"

"Jesus told me, upstairs."

The mother noted, "We don't have an upstairs," but quickly sensed the significance of what had been communicated. After much travail and many prayers, the Barker family were in a sealing room in the Salt Lake Temple in the fall of 1995, where a little girl with dark hair and dark eyes, from Kazakhstan,

was sealed to them for time and eternity. Inspired children still tell parents “great and marvelous things” (3 Nephi 26:14).

Three-year-old Benjamin Ballam

Benjamin Ballam is the special spina bifida child of Michael and Laurie Ballam. He has been such a blessing to them and many others. Also spiritually precocious, Benjamin is a constant source of love and reassurance. Having had 17 surgeries, resilient Benjamin knows all about hospitals and doctors. Once, when an overwhelmed attendant became vocally upset—not at Benjamin, but over stressful circumstances—little three-year-old Benjamin exemplified the words of another Benjamin about our need to be childlike and “full of love” (Mosiah 3:19). Little Benjamin reached out, tenderly patted the irritated attendant, and said, “I love you anyway.” A similar episode occurred recently in an Israeli hospital, where little Benjamin, going through a necessary but very painful procedure, used the same loving words to reassure a physician. No wonder, brothers and sisters, in certain moments we feel children are our spiritual superiors.

Young Jacob and Andrew Clark

Joseph and Janice Clark were blessed with two sons, Jacob and Andrew. Five years ago, Joseph was stricken suddenly and, in effect, became a hospitalized quadriplegic. There, supine Joseph’s sons would often be cradled in his arms. Joseph would always smile even when he could not speak audibly. In the eyes of the world, his was a catastrophic illness. Nevertheless, Joseph, his saintly wife, and their two boys, with strong support from parents and families, coped remarkably for five years. Because they trusted God as to what was really going on, like Job they did not “[charge] God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

Amid all the incessant and difficult problems, many of us watched Janice and Joseph apply King Benjamin’s words by showing that they were “willing to submit” to what had been inflicted upon them (Mosiah 3:19). Radiant Joseph died recently. The very day after his death, prescient, nine-year-old Jacob, who knew firsthand of his father’s loving and out-reaching nature, said, “Mom, I’ll bet Dad already has a lot of friends in heaven!” A few days later, seven-year-old Andrew struggled with a computer assignment at school but later reported to his mother, “I just thought of Dad, and he helped me.”

Four-year-old Mayara Fernanda dos Santos

A four-year-old Brazilian girl, Mayara Fernanda dos Santos, suffering from leukemia and on oxygen, was blessed recently by Elder Claudio Costa and myself in Curitiba, Brazil. After the blessing, empathetic little Mayara smilingly wiped a tear from her anxious mother’s cheek. Instinctively wise beyond her years, Mayara knows how to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort,” including her precious parents, who are willing to wait upon the Lord (Mosiah 18:9).

Seven-year-old Jared Ammon

Elder Craig Zwick and I shared a precious moment in Fortaleza, Brazil, where we were privileged to bless a special seven-year-old boy who was dying of leukemia. His names—Jared Ammon—tell you much about his parents and family. Accompanied by a thoughtful mission and stake president, there was scarcely room for the four of us to stand beside the bed in the tiny room where Jared Ammon’s faithful 14-year-old sister held him in her arms. His stomach was so severely swollen. When the stake presi-

dent lifted the oxygen mask to ask if he would like a blessing, Jared said, "Yes, please." It was a privilege to bless him and to call him to serve beyond the veil. Tears flowed, for the Spirit was strong. The oxygen mask was then lifted again, and Jared Ammon was asked if there was anything else we could do for him. Jared meekly requested that we sing for him "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). Weepingly, we responded to a submissive Jared Ammon's last request, and two hours later he was released from this life.

Before emplaning the next day, we went to the viewing at the chapel. His wonderful parents were full of faith, composed, and reverently "willing to submit" (Mosiah 3:19). The sister who held Jared plans to serve a mission later on this side of the veil while Jared serves on the other.

Become as a child

Brothers and sisters, no wonder the divine direction is for each of us to be-

come "as a child" (Mosiah 3:19). Such saintliness will sustain us as we cross our Sinai, including in those moments when we must "be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Such submissive stillness is necessary because the process of consecration is not one of explanation. Only "after the trial of [our] faith" does the full witness come; meanwhile, often "a little child shall lead [us]" (Ether 12:6; Isaiah 11:6).

I gladly testify to the truth of this work, and I witness to the wonder of it all, as we are led so ably by President Hinckley. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Joseph, the man and the prophet

On this beautiful Easter Sunday, I have chosen to speak about the Prophet Joseph Smith and to emphasize some lesser-known aspects of his life that further affirm his prophetic calling.

During my college studies at BYU, I was introduced to the *History of the Church*, an edited compilation of the writings of Joseph Smith and others. After I graduated from law school, I carefully read all seven volumes. I also pursued personal research in original records in Illinois, where the Prophet Joseph lived the last five years of his life.

The man I came to know in this way was not the man I had imagined. When I was a boy, growing up in the Church,

I imagined the Prophet Joseph to be old and dignified and distant. But the Joseph Smith I met in my reading and personal research was a man of the frontier—young, emotional, dynamic, and so loved and approachable by his people that they often called him "Brother Joseph." My studies strengthened my testimony of his prophetic calling. What a remarkable man! At the same time, I could see that he was mortal and therefore subject to sin and error, pain and affliction.

Acquired knowledge rapidly

Overarching the Prophet Joseph's entire ministry were his comparative youth, his superficial formal education,

and his incredibly rapid acquisition of knowledge and maturity. He was 14 at the First Vision and 17 at the first visit from the angel Moroni. He was 21 when he received the golden plates and just 23 when he finished translating the Book of Mormon (in less than 60 working days). Over half of the revelations in our Doctrine and Covenants were given through the Prophet while he was 25 or younger. He was 26 when the First Presidency was organized and 30 when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated. He was just over 33 when he escaped his imprisonment in Missouri and resumed leadership of the Saints gathering in Nauvoo. He was 38½ when he was martyred.

Endured many mortal afflictions

Joseph Smith had more than his share of mortal afflictions. When he was about seven, he suffered an excruciatingly painful surgery. Pieces of bone in his leg were chipped away without anesthetic. He was on crutches most of the next three years. Because of the poverty of his family, he had little formal education and as a youth was compelled to work long hours to help put food on the family table. The first three children of Joseph and his beloved Emma died at birth. A later child also died at birth and another in early childhood. Only four of Joseph and Emma's nine birth children survived childhood. They also adopted twins, and one of these died as an infant.

Joseph was attacked physically on many occasions. He was often hounded by false charges. He was almost continually on the edge of financial distress. In the midst of trying to fulfill the staggering responsibilities of his sacred calling, he had to labor as a farmer or merchant to provide a living for his family. He did this without the remarkable spiritual gifts that sustained him in his prophetic calling. The Lord had advised him, "In temporal labors thou shalt not have

strength, for this is not thy calling" (D&C 24:9).

Acknowledged imperfections

Speaking of his teen years following the First Vision, Joseph wrote, "I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God." He hastened to add that this behavior did not include "any great or malignant sins" since "a disposition to commit such was never in my nature" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28).

Joseph's candor about his shortcomings is evident in the fact that one of the first revelations he recorded in writing and published to the world was a crushing rebuke he received from the Lord. The first 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon translation were lost because 22-year-old Joseph yielded to entreaties and loaned them to Martin Harris. "Behold," the Lord declared, "how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men" (D&C 3:6). The Lord told Joseph to repent or he would be stripped of his prophetic role (see D&C 3:10–11). Four later revelations, also published by the Prophet, command him to "repent and walk more uprightly" (D&C 5:21), speak of his having "sinned" (D&C 64:7; see also D&C 90:1), and rebuke him for not keeping the commandments (see D&C 93:47).

The Prophet Joseph had no role models from whom he could learn how to be a prophet and leader of the Lord's people. He learned from heavenly messengers and from the harvest of his unique spiritual gifts. He had to rely on associates who had no role models either. They struggled and learned together, and the Prophet's growth was extremely rapid.

When Joseph warned the Saints against mortal imperfections, he did not raise himself above them, and they loved him for it. He cautioned a group of Saints newly arrived in Nauvoo against the tendency to be dissatisfied if everything was not done perfectly right. "He said he was but a man and they must not expect him to be perfect," an associate recorded. "If they expected perfection from him, he should expect it from them, but if they would bear with his infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, he would likewise bear with their infirmities" (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols. [1992], 2:489).

Cheerful and playful

Joseph had a "native cheery temperament" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). He delighted in the society of his friends. "He would play with the people," one acquaintance recalled, "and he was always cheerful and happy" (Rachel Ridgeway Grant, in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1905, 551). He loved little children and often frolicked with them in a manner shocking to some accustomed to the exaggerated sobriety of other ministers. These warm, human qualities caused some to deny Joseph's prophetic role, but they endeared him to many who knew him. Our records contain numerous adoring tributes like that of an acquaintance who said, "The love the saints had for him was inexpressible" (Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1905, 554).

Resolute in his duty

Despite his familiar and friendly style, the Prophet Joseph Smith was resolute in doing his duty. During a meeting to consider disciplining a man who had rejected the counsel of the Presidency and the Twelve, he declared: "The Saints need not think because I am famil-

iar with them and am playful and cheerful, that I am ignorant of what is going on. Iniquity of any kind cannot be sustained in the Church, and it will not fare well where I am; for I am determined while I do lead the Church, to lead it right" (*History of the Church*, 5:411). On another occasion he wrote, "I am a lover of the cause of Christ and of virtue chastity and an upright steady course of conduct & a holy walk, I despise a hypocrite or a covenant breaker" (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [1984], 246).

Physically strong and courageous

All of his life, Joseph Smith lived on the frontier, where men had to pit their brute strength against nature and sometimes against one another. He was a large man, strong and physically active. He delighted in competitive sports, including pulling sticks—a test of physical strength (see *History of the Church*, 5:302).

Our archives contain many recollections of his wrestling with friends and acquaintances. On one Sabbath he and Brigham Young preached to the Saints in Ramus, Illinois, about a day's ride from Nauvoo. On Monday, before departing Ramus, Joseph matched his wrestling prowess against a man someone described as "the bully of Ramus" (see Joseph Smith Journal, 13 Mar. 1843, recorded by Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives). Joseph threw him. I am glad our current conference schedules do not provide the local members opportunity to test the visiting authorities in this manner.

Like most other leaders on the frontier, Joseph Smith did not shrink from physical confrontation, and he had the courage of a lion. Once he was kidnapped by two men who held cocked pistols to his head and repeatedly threatened to shoot him if he moved a muscle. The Prophet endured these threats for a time and then snapped back, "Shoot

away; I have endured so much persecution and oppression that I am sick of life; why then don't you shoot, and have done with it, instead of talking so much about it?" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:167; see also *History of the Church*, 5:440).

Unwavering in his divine calling

The Prophet Joseph Smith experienced severe opposition and persecution throughout his life, but in the midst of all of this he never wavered from his divine calling. During a public sermon in Nauvoo, he declared:

"The burdens which roll upon me are very great. My persecutors allow me no rest, and I find that in the midst of business and care the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Although I was called of my Heavenly Father to lay the foundation of this great work and kingdom in this dispensation, and testify of His revealed will to scattered Israel, I am subject to like passions as other men, like the prophets of olden times" (*History of the Church*, 5:516).

In a sermon preached a little over a month before he was martyred, he declared, "I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 369).

An honorable life

The event that focused anti-Mormon hostilities and led directly to the Martyrdom was the action of Mayor Joseph Smith and the city council in closing a newly established opposition newspaper in Nauvoo. Mormon historians—including Elder B. H. Roberts—had conceded that this action was illegal, but as a young law professor pursuing original research, I was pleased to find a legal basis for this action in the Illinois law of 1844. The amendment to the United States Constitution that extended the guarantee of

freedom of the press to protect against the actions of city and state governments was not adopted until 1868, and it was not enforced as a matter of federal law until 1931. (See Dallin H. Oaks, "The Suppression of the *Nauvoo Expositor*," *Utah Law Review* 9 [1965], 862–902.) We should judge the actions of our predecessors on the basis of the laws and commandments and circumstances of their day, not ours.

As students at the University of Chicago, historian Marvin S. Hill and I were intrigued with the little-known fact that five men went to trial in Illinois for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. For over 10 years we scoured libraries and archives across the nation to find every scrap of information about this trial and those involved in it. We studied the actions and words of Illinois citizens who knew Joseph Smith personally, some who hated him and plotted to kill him, and others who loved him and risked their lives to witness the trial of his accused assassins. Nothing in our discoveries in the original court records or in the testimony at the lengthy trial disclosed anything that reflected dishonor on the men who were murdered. (See Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy* [1975].)

Innocent of charges against him

The accessibility of Illinois court records led to another untouched area of research on Joseph Smith—his financial activities. Joseph I. Bentley, then a law student at Chicago, and I discovered numerous records showing the business activities of Joseph Smith. As we explained in our article, this was a period following a nationwide financial panic and depression. Economic conditions in frontier states like Illinois were ruinous. The biographers of an Illinois contemporary, Abraham Lincoln, have described his financial embarrassments during this decade, when business was precarious,

many obligations were in default, and lawsuits were common. The enemies of Joseph charged him with fraud in various property conveyances, mostly in behalf of the Church. A succession of court proceedings that extended for nearly a decade examined these claims in meticulous detail.

Finally, in 1852, long after the Saints' exodus from Illinois (so there was no conceivable political or other cause for anyone to favor the Prophet), a federal judge concluded this litigation with a decree that found no fraud or other moral impropriety by the Prophet. (See Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, "Joseph Smith and Legal Process: In the Wake of the Steamboat *Nauvoo*," *Brigham Young University Law Review* [1976], 735-82.) Independent of that decree, as one who has examined the hundreds of pages of allegations and evidence in these proceedings, I testify to the Prophet's innocence of the charges against him.

As one familiar with early Illinois property law and as a lawyer enjoying the benefit of over 100 years of hindsight, I can readily see where Joseph and his fellow Church leaders and members were seriously disadvantaged by poor legal advice in some of the controversies just described. Bad legal advice may have been one of the causes for Brigham Young's well-publicized negative opinions of lawyers. I have often chuckled at his 1845 declaration that he "would rather have a six-shooter than all the lawyers in Illinois" (*History of the Church*, 7:386).

Men who knew Joseph best and stood closest to him in Church leadership loved and sustained him as a prophet. His brother Hyrum chose to die at his side. John Taylor, also with him when he was murdered, said, "I testify before God, angels, and men, that he was a good, honorable, virtuous man . . . —that his private and public character was unimpeachable—and that he lived and died

as a man of God" (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1987], 355; see also D&C 135:3). Brigham Young declared, "I do not think that a man lives on the earth that knew [Joseph Smith] any better than I did; and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, no better man ever lived or does live upon this earth" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:332).

Testimony of the Prophet Joseph

Like other faithful Latter-day Saints, I have built my life on the testimony and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In all of my reading and original research, I have never been dissuaded from my testimony of his prophetic calling and of the gospel and priesthood restoration the Lord initiated through him. I solemnly affirm the testimony Joseph Smith expressed in the famous Wentworth letter of 1842:

"The standard of truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*Times and Seasons*, 1 Mar. 1842, 709; in *History of the Church*, 4:540).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. In addition to the sources cited in the text, see Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (1984); Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1989); "Joseph Smith," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1331-39; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (1995), 54; Richard Kigel, *The Frontier Years of Abe Lincoln* (1986), 175-76.

Elder W. Mack Lawrence

Privilege to hear the word of God

Greetings, my brothers and sisters everywhere. What a great privilege it is to be in the presence of God's living prophet and to receive from him, and others who have been called by the Lord, the inspired words of counsel, testimony, and admonition that have been delivered in this wonderful conference. I testify that what we have heard from them has been "the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, [and] the voice of the Lord" and, as the scriptures declare, is "the power of God unto salvation" (D&C 68:4).

In this respect I am reminded of a declaration made at the conclusion of conference many years ago by Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "We have heard enough truth and direction in this conference," he declared, "to bring us into the presence of God if we would follow it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, 132-33).

Responsibility to live by the word of God

Please note that it is insufficient to just *hear* the word of God in gatherings such as this conference. In order to have God's word impact our lives—to receive the promised blessings—we must *follow* it. Indeed the Lord has proclaimed, "For you shall *live* by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44; italics added).

We have heard God's words at this conference, and now our responsibility is to live by them. At the conclusion of our last general conference President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "I will be a better man if I will put into my life the things of which I have been reminded in this conference, and I would like to suggest that each of you will be a better man or

woman if you will put into your lives something of what you have heard in this great conference" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

By following this counsel, we strengthen our conversion to Christ and His gospel and, in this sense, become more committed to keeping covenants and commandments and to doing our duty in the Church. This, in my opinion, is the solution to one of the major challenges that I have observed during the years in which I have served in my present and other leadership callings.

Whenever I have asked stake presidents about their biggest challenge or concern, they repeatedly say, "To have the Saints committed and converted so they will be faithful in keeping their covenants and fulfilling their callings." I have given that challenge a lot of prayerful consideration. Certainly Latter-day Saints do not lack opportunities to hear the word of God, but unfortunately they are often dilatory in the follow-through and the application in living the word.

Commitment is the fruit of conversion

What is it that gives us a testimony and a desire to serve the Lord "with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2) and to "be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord"? (1 Nephi 4:34).

As I have pondered this and prayed about it, I have concluded that the problem lies in a lack of conversion and commitment: *conversion* to Christ, His gospel, and His Church; and, subsequently, *commitment* to the covenants and individual callings one may have received to serve and strengthen others. In this regard it is of interest to consider Christ's words to Peter: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke

22:32). Thus, commitment seems to be an outgrowth or fruit of conversion.

In order to receive a fulness of promised blessings in our lives and to be fully effective in our callings, we must become converted. Would any of us truly do any less than our very best in keeping a covenant or commandment, fulfilling an assignment, or in following Christ if we were truly converted in our hearts?

Not casual or complacent

A truly converted follower of Christ—one who merits the designation of disciple or Saint—could not be casual or complacent in his or her approach to service in the Church nor in keeping covenants and commandments. Such a one would surely follow the Lord's admonition to "learn his [or her] duty, and to act . . . in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

What does it mean to be converted? President Harold B. Lee said, "Conversion must mean more than just being a 'card carrying' member of the church with a tithing receipt [or] a temple recommend." One who is converted "strive[s] continually to improve inward weaknesses and not merely the outward appearances" (*Church News*, 25 May 1974, 2).

Not going through the motions

One who is converted and committed will not simply "go through the motions" in fulfilling a Church service assignment. A converted home teacher will not be satisfied with just making a visit to one of his assigned families so he can report to his quorum leader that his home teaching is "completed" or "done." A converted Primary teacher would not be content to merely "give" a lesson but would want to teach by the Spirit, thereby making a real difference in the impressionable lives of the children entrusted to his or her care.

Not fulfilling quotas or assignments

Truly converted Latter-day Saints do not go to the temple because of a quota they are expected to fulfill, but out of a sincere desire to perform sacred and saving ordinances in behalf of deceased ancestors—or even complete strangers—who cannot do the work for themselves. We do not serve others or fulfill assignments for statistical or reporting purposes, but in a spirit of love and a commitment to Christ and our Father in Heaven.

In this respect, consider the counsel of President Hinckley, given in a leadership training meeting:

"There is much more to be achieved than statistical improvement," President Hinckley said. "More importantly, *we should be concerned with the spiritual dimension of our people and the enlargement of this dimension.* There is a tendency in all of us to ask for better statistical performance. There is a tendency to *impose quotas behind which usually lies imposition of pressure* to achieve improved statistics. *In the work of the Lord there is a more appropriate motivation than pressure. There is the motivation that comes of true conversion.* When there throbs in the heart of an individual Latter-day Saint a great and vital testimony of the truth of this work, he [meaning, of course, men and women] will be found doing his duty in the Church. He will be found in his sacrament meetings. He will be found in his priesthood meetings. He will be found paying his honest tithes and offerings. He will be doing his home teaching. He will be found in attendance at the temple as frequently as his circumstances will permit. He will have within him a great desire to share the Gospel with others. He will be found strengthening and lifting his brethren and sisters. [In other words, he will be committed.] *It is conversion that makes the difference*" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 6 Apr. 1984; italics added).

Take steps toward true conversion

Brothers and sisters, if you are not presently enjoying the blessings that come from conversion and commitment, I urge you to take the necessary steps to bring about this change in your heart. Perhaps my appeal is much the same as that extended by the prophet Alma when he said to the people of his day: "And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren [and sisters] of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14).

This "mighty change in your hearts" is what conversion is all about. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "People are converted by their hearts being penetrated by the Spirit of the Lord when they humbly hearken to the testimonies of the Lord's servants" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:40).

I emphasize again what I stated at the commencement of my remarks: it is insufficient to *hear* the word of God as declared in this conference or in other places of worship. In order to make it effective—to receive the promised blessings—we must *follow* it; or, as President Smith noted, we must "*hearken* to the testimonies of the Lord's servants."

May I humbly admonish each of you to evaluate your present state of conversion and commitment. I invite you to have a personal interview with yourself in which you ask how effective you are in your present calling to serve. Consider how fully you are keeping the commandments and acting upon the counsel given you by the prophets and other divinely called leaders of the Church—yes, including your stake president and bishop. Do you have to be reminded of your duty, or are you a committed self-starter and finisher?

"Have ye spiritually been born of God?"

Let us return to Alma's question: "Have ye spiritually been born of God?" It is noteworthy that Alma concluded his admonition to the people of his day by bearing testimony of how his personal conversion was obtained:

"Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?"

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have *fasted and prayed* many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:45–46; italics added).

That same spirit of revelation—the spirit of conversion, if you will—is available to each of us as we diligently seek for it through fasting, prayer, obedience, and searching the scriptures (see Alma 17:2–3).

Be doers of the word

May we go from this conference with a renewed desire to be more fully converted and committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we follow the admonition of the Apostle James to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

I believe in Jesus Christ with all my soul. May we understand and follow His teachings as found in the holy scriptures. This is His divine Church. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord ushered in the fulness of the gospel in this last dispensation of time. President Gordon B. Hinckley is our true and living prophet. This is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man." El-

der Rulon G. Craven of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder Rulon G. Craven

Meeting with repentant members

My brothers and sisters, it has been a wonderful experience to work with the Saints who love their Heavenly Father and love one another. We have witnessed their valiancy and their challenges as they face the trials of life.

During the past years I have at times been asked by the Brethren to meet with repentant members of the Church and interview them for the restoration of their temple blessings. This has always been a spiritually moving experience to restore the blessings of those wonderful people who have repented. I have asked some of them the question, "What happened in your life that caused you to temporarily lose your membership in the Church?" With tear-filled eyes they answered, "I didn't obey the basic principles of the gospel: prayer, attending church regularly, serving in the Church, and studying the gospel. I then gave in to temptations and lost the guidance of the Holy Spirit." It is always a special experience for me to meet these repentant souls and to feel with them the miracle of forgiveness and the joy of being reunited with the Saints and the Holy Spirit.

Turn away from temptation

Temptation is a necessary part of our earthly experience. The Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith explains the

reason why we are tempted: "It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet" (D&C 29:39).

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi explains the consequences of yielding to temptation: "The temptations of the devil . . . blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Nephi 12:17).

To blind the eyes is *not* to see or acknowledge the consequences of our actions. To harden the heart is to *ignore* or not be willing to accept counsel. To be led into the broad roads is to give in to worldly enticements and lose the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Brigham Young stated: "Many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. . . . The spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 69-70).

Temptation is like a magnetic force which holds a metal object in its power. It loses its magnetic force and power when you turn away from it. So we must

turn away from temptation; then it will lose its power.

Road signs for dealing with temptation

Our minds, throughout the day, are continually active. We choose the avenues of thought that our mind travels. Allowing worldly thoughts to enter your mind can lead to unrighteous acts. As we travel the highways of life, our physical senses are continually bombarded with billboards, posters, magazines, videos, movies, et cetera, that entice and tempt the mind and, if allowed, create mental pictures that are not becoming to a Latter-day Saint.

When evil thoughts arise—Stop! Think! Control your mind! Visualize a large EXIT sign in your mind's eye. Immediately change your thoughts. Get off of that avenue of thinking.

When unrighteous feelings and desires well up inside of you, the Holy Ghost will prompt NO. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Stop! Think! Visualize a WRONG WAY sign in your mind. Immediately change or erase those thoughts leading to wrong, unrighteous feelings and evil fantasies that can become addictive to mind and body.

When tempted to choose an unrighteous act or entertain unrighteous thoughts, look down the road ahead and contemplate the inevitable consequences of that act. Stop! Think! Visualize a STOP sign in your mind. Put on your mental brakes. Immediately change your thinking to something different and something uplifting.

To overcome temptation, you and I must control our thoughts. *Exit* from your mind bad thoughts. Avoid the *wrong way* of unrighteous thoughts. *Stop* thoughts that lead to behavior unbecoming to a Latter-day Saint. You do not have to yield to temptation! Discipline what you allow your eyes to see, your ears to hear, your mouth to speak, and your hands to touch.

Consequences of yielding to temptation

Yielding to temptation can lead to the addiction of both body and spirit. Addiction can be overpowering and lead to enslavement, and enslavement leads to loss of freedom and inner peace.

When persons allow themselves to succumb to temptation, they are acting against counsel—the counsel of the Holy Ghost, the counsel of our prophet leaders, the counsel of sound doctrine, the counsel of covenants, and often the counsel of those who love them most. They then separate themselves from the friendship and love of others and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming temptation develops strength

As eternal beings living this earthly experience, we will not be free from temptation. Temptation implies an inner struggle to do that which is right. The person who thinks continually in a sensual and carnal manner cannot undergo inner spiritual development. His or her sensual thinking prevents spiritual growth.

Elder George Q. Cannon said: "Unless [individuals] were exposed to temptation they never could know themselves, their own powers, their own weaknesses nor the power of God. If Satan had no power to tempt mankind, they would be in a state where they could neither know good nor evil; they could not know happiness nor misery. All their powers would lie dormant, for there would be nothing to arouse them. They would be destitute of that experience which prepares men to become like God, their Eternal Father" (*Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. in 1 [1987], 109).

Through our obedience to gospel principles, the enticements of the world lessen in our lives. With each right choice we make, we spiritually empower ourselves. The accumulation of right choices

builds inner spiritual strength and divine character. We should expect temptation, for without temptations there would be little education and little character improvement.

How to overcome temptation

It is a frightening realization that the powers of evil will increase in the world. This brings us to the questions, What can we do? Is there a way to escape from the powers of evil? Yes, there is.

Members of the Church can overcome temptation by (1) obedience to the guiding principles and doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ, (2) following the counsel of our prophets and leaders, and (3) living in such a way that our lives are constantly influenced by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Train your mind to obey gospel principles and covenants. Stay on the highway of daily personal and family prayer, the avenue of studying the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets, the road of serving in the Church, and be willing

to get off the wrong road daily and on the right road leading to eternal life. Your greatest protection against temptation is an active and vibrant testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which binds us to our Heavenly Father. Our greatest example of overcoming temptation is the Savior. "He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

My brothers and sisters, I know this work is true. I know prophets travel the earth today. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that God does live in the heavens. As we draw near to our Heavenly Father in obedience and righteousness, He will draw near to us. He will bless us, perfect us, and protect us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Rulon G. Craven of the Seventy.

Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will now speak to us.

Sister Susan L. Warner

Memories of spiritual feelings

My dear brothers and sisters, I remember as a little girl driving across the Nevada desert with my family to attend general conference in this Tabernacle. Automobiles did not have air-conditioning, so we traveled at night with a canvas water bag tied to the front of the car in case the radiator boiled over. I remember standing outside this building, singing the hymns of Zion in the darkness of the morning, waiting for the large wooden doors to open. I remember secretly hoping that I wouldn't be seated behind one of the wide, round pillars, or worse, a lady wearing a large hat. Though I was scarcely tall enough to see, I remember the feel-

ings that came over me as everyone rose when the prophet entered. Those feelings of excited reverence are spiritual feelings that return each time I enter this building or hear our leaders speak in general conference. I remember what I have received and heard. I remember what I know and what I have felt.

Each of us has memories of spiritual feelings. Some of us remember spiritual feelings from our earliest childhood. Some of us may have memories of feelings when we first discovered the Lord's true Church. Almost all have spiritual feelings connected with the love of mother, father, brothers, and sisters. We may remember feelings of love and belonging that have come while serving

in the kingdom with our fellow Saints. We may remember feeling spiritually renewed on a Sabbath evening after attending church, studying the gospel together, and sharing testimonies. We may remember earnest feelings that have accompanied fervent prayer, or the comfort of the Holy Ghost in times of trial or sadness. We may remember the sorrow and the joy of deep repentance—of feeling forgiven and cleansed. We may remember profound feelings of gratitude for the Savior's atoning gift of love to us.

Results of remembering spiritual feelings

Remembering our spiritual feelings draws us to our Heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. It gives us a sense of our true identity. It reminds us of what the prophets have recently proclaimed to the entire world, that "each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Recalling spiritual feelings reminds us of who we really are.

It is no wonder that over and over in the scriptures we are instructed, counseled, and commanded, "O remember, remember." This repeated invitation emphasizes the important connection between our recollection of spiritual feelings in our past and our faithfulness in the present. Through John the Apostle, the Lord gave this message: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard" (Revelation 3:3).

Satan wants us to remember lies

Satan wants us to be slow to remember what we have received and heard. He wants us to minimize and even forget the quiet witnesses of the Spirit that have told us who we really are. Part of Satan's evil design is to give our children

mistaken ideas of who they are—lies for them to remember.

An elementary school principal reported to me that even our young school-children see and hear the defilement of sacred things. In television programs, videos, and popular music they are exposed to evil things that desensitize them, making sin seem normal and acceptable.

Like all of us, our children are subtly and constantly encouraged to believe that life has no sacred purpose and that living selfishly is natural and commendable. Under such influences, children may grow up without understanding that they have a Father in Heaven who loves them, that their bodies are sacred temples, and that obedience brings good and happy feelings.

Build spiritual foundations in families

We can help counteract these influences in our families when we follow the counsel of our prophets and, in a spirit of love, study the scriptures together, pray, and hold regular family home evenings where we share experiences and bear testimony to one another.

To help us teach our children and youth, our leaders have provided *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 1990) and "My Gospel Standards," which is found on the back of the booklet *My Achievement Days* (1995). When we talk about these things in our families, share our feelings, and learn together at home, we build in each family member, young and old, a rich reserve of doctrinal knowledge and spiritual feelings which will come to their remembrance again and again.

Enos, in the Book of Mormon, records his remembrance: "I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3). Enos had been given a reserve of doctrine and feelings to draw upon. He

gratefully said of his father, "He taught me . . . in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

One widely recognized expert in helping troubled youth said that the young people who most readily and completely come back after losing their way are those who have a foundation of standards and spirituality to which they can return. They are strengthened by their spiritual memories, and for them repentance feels like coming home.

Children come into this world pure and open and eager to learn. It is our happy privilege and solemn responsibility to lovingly teach them plain and simple gospel truths, provide opportunities for them to feel the Spirit, and help them identify and recognize their own spiritual feelings. Heavenly Father said to Father Adam, "Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children" (Moses 6:58).

Families' efforts are never wasted

In our family we have tried to hold early-morning scripture study. But we were often frustrated when one son complained and had to be coaxed out of bed. When he finally came, he would often put his head right down on the table. Years later, while serving his mission, he wrote home in a letter: "Thank you for teaching me the scriptures. I want you to know that all those times I acted like I was sleeping, I was really listening with my eyes closed."

Parents and teachers, our efforts to help our children establish a heritage of rich spiritual memories are never wasted. Sometimes the seeds we plant may not bear fruit for years, but we may take comfort in the hope that someday the children we teach will remember how they have "received and heard" the things of the Spirit. They will remember what they know and what they have felt. They will

remember their identity as children of Heavenly Father, who sent them here with a divine purpose.

What we should remember

Each week all over the world, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints come together and remember who they are. "I am a child of God," sing Primary children in many languages. Young women everywhere repeat, "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us" (*Young Women Leadership Handbook* [1992], 4). Young men remember when they serve and perform their duties as worthy Aaronic Priesthood bearers. And when we partake of the sacrament, all of us remember as we witness our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and covenant to always remember Him.

I recall a day when one of our children was leaving for school with his friend. I waved good-bye and called out, "Remember who you are." As they walked away, I overheard the friend ask, "Why does your mother always say that to you? What does she mean?" I heard our son's quick reply, "She means, 'Be good.'" He was exactly right. We remember who we are by doing good, and we do good when we remember who we are.

We are to remember to keep His commandments in all things (see 1 Nephi 15:25), remember to search the scriptures diligently (see Mosiah 1:7), remember the words our parents have taught us (see Alma 57:21), remember the counsel of the prophets and apostles (see Jude 1:17), remember the awfulness of transgression (see 2 Nephi 9:39), remember that the Lord is merciful unto all who believe on His name (see Alma 32:22), and remember that He came to redeem us (see Helaman 5:9).

I join with children around the world, bearing my testimony in this Primary song and remembering what we

have received and heard, what we know and feel:

I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
I know who I am. I know God's plan.
I'll follow him in faith.
I believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.
I'll honor his name.
I'll do what is right; I'll follow his light.
His truth I will proclaim.

["The Church of Jesus Christ," *Children's Songbook*, 77]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, has just spoken to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Visiting starving people in Africa

Brothers and sisters, this has been another glorious conference. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me as I now have the privilege to speak to you.

In February Sister Ballard and I attended a multistake conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. We were impressed with the faith and the special spirit of the members.

Visiting the African continent brought back memories of my earlier assignments to East and West Africa. I thought once again of the special fast by Church members worldwide in 1985. It provided approximately six million dollars to relieve suffering and hunger primarily in drought-stricken Ethiopia. Brother Glenn L. Pace and I witnessed firsthand the fruits of generous contributions by Church members when the First Presidency assigned us to go to Africa, assess the needs of the people, and recommend how to make the best use of these special funds.

We visited refugee camps in that arid country. The land was as barren as any I had ever seen. We visited Red Cross centers and field hospitals where the desperately ill were being cared for. Such dreadful, pitiful suffering broke

our hearts. We saw sick mothers lying on cots trying to feed and comfort their children, many of whom had the sunken eyes and pencil-thin arms and legs of those in the advanced stages of starvation. This was one of the most heart-wrenching experiences of my life. I had never seen anything that touched my heart so deeply as the anxious yearning for food and nourishment that I saw there.

Many people are starving spiritually

Brothers and sisters, even as people in Ethiopia were starving physically because of the lack of food, far too many people in the world are starving spiritually. Sadly, most of them have no idea where to find real spiritual nourishment. They wander to and fro—another form of pathetic refugees. Those who yearn for true spiritual light and knowledge can find it only through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit enlightens and gives understanding of the eternal purpose of life. By the Spirit, Church members know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. We should, therefore, feel compelled to share our spiritual knowledge with all of our Father's children by inviting them to pull a chair up to the

Lord's table and feast on the words of Christ.

"Come unto the Holy One of Israel," wrote the great Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, "and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness."¹ Later Nephi urged his followers to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."²

Cultivate spiritual strength in ourselves

God's chosen prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, recently said:

"Every member of this church is an individual man or woman, boy or girl. Our great responsibility is to see that each is 'remembered and nourished by the good word of God' (Moroni 6:4), that each has opportunity for growth and expression and training in the work and ways of the Lord. . . .

"This work is concerned with people, each a son or daughter of God. In describing its achievements we speak in terms of numbers, but all of our efforts must be dedicated to the development of the individual."³

For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to fulfill its divine mission to assist in bringing "to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,"⁴ *all* members need to generate an appetite for gospel sustenance. We must "hunger and thirst after righteousness"⁵ before we can be filled. We need to cultivate spiritual strength within ourselves before we can ever hope to engender it in others.

Individual, personal testimony of gospel truth, particularly of the divine life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to our eternal life. "And this is life eternal," said the Savior, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."⁶ In other words, life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowl-

edge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food.

Once again quoting President Hinckley:

"The gaining of a strong and secure testimony is the privilege and opportunity of every individual member of the Church. The Master said, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17).

"Service in behalf of others, study, and prayer lead to faith in this work and then to knowledge of its truth. This has always been a personal pursuit, as it must always be in the future."⁷

Invite others to the spiritual feast

We must fortify ourselves before we can ever hope to offer spiritual nourishment to others. Once we have nourished ourselves with the good word of Christ and feasted personally at His table so that our testimony is strong and vibrant, we are obligated to join with the missionaries in a balanced effort to invite others—beginning with our families—to the spiritual banquet. As the Lord said to His beloved Apostle Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."⁸ And again speaking to Peter, the Savior asked: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."⁹

If we are obedient to the Savior's command given to Peter, we will focus our attention on the spiritual growth and development of those for whom we are responsible. Feeding the Lord's sheep requires each of us to awaken our inter-

est in others. The duty to invite others to partake of the gospel feast does not rest only on the shoulders of the missionaries. That sober and significant duty belongs to each member of the Church, for "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor."¹⁰

Today our prophet is calling for enthusiastic and dynamic love for our Heavenly Father's children. He asks us to see the spiritual hunger around us and to respond by willingly sharing our abundance. No power on earth can accomplish as much as one righteous man or woman or boy or girl.

Build faith at home

The home and family have vital roles in cultivating and developing personal faith and testimony. The family is the basic unit of society; the best place for individuals to build faith and strong testimonies is in righteous homes filled with love. Love for our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ is greatly enhanced when the gospel is taught and lived in the home. True principles of eternal life are embedded in the hearts and souls of young and old alike when scriptures are read and discussed, when prayers are offered morning and night, and when reverence for God and obedience to Him are modeled in everyday conduct. Just as the best meals are home cooked, the most nourishing gospel instruction takes place at home. Strong, faithful families have the best opportunity to produce strong, faithful members of the Church.

The recent proclamation to the world on the family, issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, makes very clear that the family is ordained of God. The proclamation warns that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

The Church's supporting role

The family is where the foundation of personal spiritual growth is built and nurtured; the Church, then, is the scaffolding that helps support and strengthen the family. While the Church is secondary to the family in teaching gospel principles, much spiritual learning and growth come through the Church. For example, carefully planned sacrament meetings should be a spiritual feast in which we worship and learn of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bishops, if your sacrament meetings are less than a banquet of spiritual nourishment, I urge you to invite suggestions from your ward council, especially the sisters, on ways to make every sacrament meeting a more reverent, spiritual experience. Let the council also help teach our members that the chapel is a special place in our buildings where we come in a spirit of respect for God and reverence for His holy Son. Let the quiet, peaceful promptings of the Holy Spirit abide in our worship services, causing spiritual enlightenment and nourishment to flow into our lives.

Teaching at home and at church

Whether we are teaching in the home or in the Church, we must keep a clear vision of the gospel's eternal purpose. Not long ago I experienced the kind of faith and spiritual strength the gospel provides when an 18-year-old sister, who was fighting for her life in a battle with cancer, asked me for a blessing. She said: "Brother Ballard, I am not afraid to die. I would like to live. There are things I would still like to accomplish in this life, but I know that Jesus is my Savior and my Redeemer. During these past few years He has become my best friend. I trust Him, and I trust you as His representative. Whatever He wants for me, I am prepared."

We pled for a miracle but at her request left the matter with Heavenly Father. She died shortly thereafter with the peace of the Lord attending her and her faithful family.

Brothers and sisters, we should teach revealed principles and inspired doctrine in our homes and in our Church meetings. Every parent and class instructor should be well prepared to teach the gospel by the power of the Spirit to ensure that testimonies are renewed and understanding of life and life eternal is fortified.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles ask leaders to emphasize constantly, in priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and stake and ward councils, the preeminence of the home and family. That is where scriptures are studied and prayers are offered regularly so all family members will strive to follow the Savior in all things.

The temple is the ultimate feast

Leaders also need to emphasize that all adult members of the Church should strive to become worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple. Members should identify their ancestors and perform the sacred temple ordinances for them.

Parents and leaders need to do everything possible to prepare each young man to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and the ordinances of the temple and to serve a full-time mission. Likewise, young women need to prepare to make and keep sacred covenants and receive temple ordinances. Making and keeping sacred covenants in the house of the Lord is the most delicious course at the Lord's table. It is the ultimate, satisfying spiritual feast of the gospel of Jesus Christ in mortality; it has eternal consequences. Our living prophet has expressed his great vision of those who qualify for temple ordinances, keep temple covenants, and serve regularly in the house of the Lord:

"We would be a better people," President Hinckley said. "There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us."¹¹

The Savior offers untold bounty

Through His prophet, God has promised to replace the spiritual hunger that plagues mankind with untold bounty from His own table. All He asks is that we come unto Christ and then do all we can, through our families and with the support of the Church, to help all of our Father's children succeed spiritually in this critical journey of mortality.

"Behold," said the Lord, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹²

I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ. He lives and invites everyone to partake of the joyful feast of the gospel. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. May we all be blessed, my beloved brothers and sisters, with an increased desire to seek after and feast on the things of the Spirit, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 9:51.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 72-73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 52-53.
4. Moses 1:39.
5. Matthew 5:6.
6. John 17:3.

7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 53.
8. Luke 22:32.
9. John 21:17.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:81.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
12. Revelation 3:20.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Ricks College combined choirs, the BYU combined men's choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given during this conference; the doctors, the Church Health

Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to the local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Go Forth in Faith." The benediction will be offered by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

This has been a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. We have heard much of wisdom and inspiration. Our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. Many of us, I hope, have resolved within our hearts to live more fully the principles of the gospel.

Surely we have been blessed in the talks that have been given. The prayers have been inspiring, and the music has been wonderful. We are so greatly blessed with dedicated musicians in the Church. They add so substantially to the spirit of the conference. Every choir and chorus has performed exceptionally well.

Praise for the Tabernacle Choir

I wish to say a particular word about this Tabernacle Choir, which has sung

to us today. I came across a letter written by Wilford Woodruff and his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, under date of February 11, 1895, 101 years ago. It was addressed to the choir at that time. It reads:

"We desire to see this choir not only maintain the high reputation it has earned at home and abroad, but become the highest exponent of the 'Divine Art' in all the land; and the worthy head, example and leader of all other choirs and musical bodies in the Church, inspiring musicians and poets with purest sentiment and song and harmony, until its light shall shine forth to the world undimmed, and nations shall be charmed [by] its music."

The letter goes on: "This choir is and should be a great auxiliary to the

cause of Zion. By means of its perfection in the glorious realm of song, it may unstop the ears of thousands now deaf to the truth, soften their stony hearts, and inspire precious souls with a love for that which is divine. Thus removing prejudice, dispelling ignorance and shedding forth the precious light of heaven to tens of thousands who have been, and are still, misled concerning us" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 3:267-68).

Such has been the responsibility resting upon this choir for more than a century. Personnel changes have occurred through the years, but the quality of performance has only improved. This choir is one of the great treasures of the Church. I think it is one of the great treasures of America. I regard it as the outstanding choir in all the world. May it continue its great mission of providing lofty and inspiring music at home and abroad. I thank, in behalf of the entire Church, the officers, directors, organists, and members of this dedicated body of talented and gifted musicians who give so generously of their time.

60 Minutes interview

Now I think I might venture to mention another matter. Months ago I was invited to be interviewed by Mike Wallace, a tough senior reporter for the CBS *60 Minutes* program, which is broadcast across America to more than 20 million listeners each week.

I recognized that if I were to appear, critics and detractors of the Church would also be invited to participate. I knew we could not expect that the program would be entirely positive for us.

On the other hand, I felt that it offered the opportunity to present some affirmative aspects of our culture and message to many millions of people. I concluded that it was better to lean into

the stiff wind of opportunity than to simply hunker down and do nothing. It has been an interesting experience. The program's crews have photographed hours of eyeball-to-eyeball interview (if you'll pardon that expression), dialogue, and formal talks in various settings. They have interviewed other members of the Church, as well as our critics. From all of this I assume they have distilled a presentation of about a quarter of an hour.

We have no idea what the outcome will be—that is, I don't. We will discover this this evening when it is aired in this valley. If it turns out to be favorable, I will be grateful. Otherwise, I pledge I'll never get my foot in that kind of trap again. In the Salt Lake City area it will be released at 6:00 P.M., and in many other areas across the nation at 7:00 P.M. local time.

"Remember . . . thy church, O Lord"

In the prayer of dedication at the Kirtland Temple, which prayer was received by revelation according to the Prophet, he petitioned the Lord in these words:

"Remember all thy church, O Lord, . . . that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth;

"That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:72-73).

We are witnessing the answer to that remarkable pleading. Increasingly the Church is being recognized at home and abroad for what it truly is. There are still those, not a few, who criticize and rebel, who apostatize and lift their voices against this work. We have always had them. They speak their piece as they walk across the stage of life, and then they are soon forgotten. I suppose we always will have them as long as we are trying to do the work of the Lord. The

honest in heart will detect that which is true and that which is false. We go forward, marching as an army with banners emblazoned with the everlasting truth. We are a cause that is militant for truth and goodness. We are a body of Christian soldiers "marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before" ("Onward, Christian Soldiers," *Hymns*, no. 246).

Everywhere we go, we see great vitality in this work. There is enthusiasm wherever it is organized. It is the work of the Redeemer. It is the gospel of good news. It is something to be happy and excited about.

Brothers and sisters, let us now return to our homes with increased resolution in our hearts to live the gospel more fully, to serve with greater diligence, and to stand for truth with enthusiasm and without fear. As a servant of the Lord, I leave my blessing upon you. May you be happy as you walk with faith, I humbly pray, in the name of Him whom we all love and serve, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Go Forth in Faith."
Elder Merrill J. Bateman offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs. Kevin Brower and Richard Robison conducted, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a Brigham Young University combined men's choir provided the music. Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

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